

**THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL  
SECTION 14**

# THE GUIDELINES

**The AA Guidelines are compiled from  
the experience of AA members  
in the various service areas.**

**They also reflect guidance given through  
the *Twelve Traditions* and  
the Australian and North American General Service  
Conferences**

**2020**





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## **SUGGESTIONS FOR LEADING BEGINNERS' MEETINGS**

- **What kinds of meetings work best?**
- **What is a good general outline for the leader?**
- **How Leaders can prepare themselves**
- **Suggested topics for meetings**
- **Suggestions on arrangements for beginners' meetings**

This information is for all AAs. Although it is written mainly to help the Group holding beginners' meetings, or the member leading them, any other AA will find it worthwhile reading.

By receiving and giving AA help, every one of us becomes a link in a chain around the world. All of us cling to the chain to save our lives, and yet each of us is part of it – depending on all the others to help keep the chain unbroken.

So these few pages explore ways to strengthen the links – ways through which we can stay sober by helping other alcoholics stay away from one drink, one day at a time. It is a collection, from AA Groups everywhere, of suggestions for helping AA newcomers gain sobriety and grow in the program.

### **WHAT KINDS OF BEGINNERS' MEETINGS WORK BEST?**

Many kinds have worked well. They range from small, unplanned, informal discussions, with newcomers doing most of the talking and a different leader each time, to large sessions, prearranged in a series, with one continuing leader giving prepared talks on specific AA subjects.

A combination of these two types seems to work best. Groups have found that newcomers' chances of recovery are higher if they can actively take part in AA discussions as soon as possible – and that they also need someone with AA experience to tell them the essential facts about alcoholism and our program of recovery.

Therefore, many beginners' meetings include both:

1. A brief talk by the leader, for not more than twenty or thirty minutes in an hour meeting, and
2. Discussion by all present.

## WHAT IS A GOOD GENERAL OUTLINE FOR THE LEADER?

Many experienced leaders of beginners' meetings say that their opening remarks generally cover these points:

1. Welcome to newcomers.  
(Newcomers are essential to AA's health and growth. In the first few weeks they will discover that their fresh experiences make them vital links in reaching other suffering alcoholics).
2. Assurance that newcomers' anonymity will be respected.
3. Explanation that everything the leader or any other member says is only the individual's opinion, that no one can speak on behalf of the entire worldwide Fellowship (or, indeed, of any group).
4. Brief statement of the Fellowship's size and scope.
5. Brief sharing of the leader's own experience, including in condensed form the usual elements of an AA talk:

identification as an alcoholic

(not necessarily *events* while drinking, but *feelings*),

how the leader came to AA,

recovery in the program,

knowledge gained from AA.

6. Comments on any particular topic that, in the leader's opinion, newcomers need or want to know about  
(there are suggestions on the following pages).
7. Information about other local meetings.
8. Recommendation of the AA message in print – so that newcomers may take it with them after the meeting in the form of AA books, pamphlets, or the *Grapevine*.

## CAN A LEADER PREPARE FOR BEGINNERS' MEETINGS?

*Most say they can if they keep their minds open to suggestions from the experience of others. This guide both summarises such experience and points out Conference-approved literature in which generally accepted AA thinking on many important topics is given in greater detail. For instance, the booklet "Living Sober" – specifically designed for newcomers – provides possible answers to questions often asked at beginners' meetings.*

When a leader is "willing to go to any length" to help newcomers, preparation for a meeting can be an exciting and rewarding venture, not a chore.

As one leader wrote, "After all, I am responsible." Experience of nearly 70 years throughout the Fellowship does indeed suggest strongly that anyone who sets out to lead newcomers meeting should take this privilege as a serious responsibility – and work at it.

## SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR BEGINNERS' MEETINGS

### #1 How to stay away from one drink one day at a time

(In any series of beginners' meetings, there are usually new faces at each session. Therefore, leaders have found that this topic should always be included in every meeting.)

When we first came to AA, many of us did not realise that the *first* drink triggered the compulsion to drink more and more: that it deluded us into thinking we could drink another safely, then another and another.

The danger seems obvious now, but many of today's newcomers are just as baffled as we once were. So the leader usually explains the significance of the first drink – and how to avoid just that one, for at least one day or one hour.

Almost every AA has a favourite means of doing this, and other members attending a meeting can make suggestions for additions to the following:

1. The twenty-four hour (or one-minute, if necessary) plan.
2. The **HALT** reminder – never getting too **Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired**.
3. Sticking close to your sponsor – and discussing personal problems with him or her.
4. *Postponing* the drink.
5. Going to lots of AA meetings.
6. Keeping pockets stuffed with AA reading matter.
7. Prayer – in whatever form the new member prefers it.
8. Changing routines – especially at drinking hours – to break up the old habit patterns.
9. Spending time with other members individually – either in person or on the telephone (and especially during old drinking hours).
10. Spending time in meeting rooms or central offices where AA's gather outside of regular meeting hours.
11. Starting work on the *Twelve Steps*, to fight such threats to sobriety as resentments, self-pity, and the tendency to dwell on the past or the future.

### #2 Alcoholism, the Disease

A **very important secret** of successful *Twelfth Step* work is revealed in Chapter 7: "Working with Others" in the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" (The 'Big Book'). It is developed more on pp 13 and 67-68 of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age".

Alcoholics usually have to face the medical facts of the disease, as well as the present unmanageability of their own lives, before they can accept help. This seems to be true even for newcomers who are forced by pressure from others to come to AA for the first time.

The medical viewpoint on alcoholism that helped to bring about the birth of AA is outlined in "*The Doctor's Opinion*", located in the front section of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous". It is explained in further detail in the first three chapters of the Big Book, and in the AA pamphlets "*Three Talks to Medical Societies by Bill W*", and "*AA as a Resource for the Medical Profession*".

Many good descriptions of the disease are used by AA members, such as: ‘threefold illness’, ‘progressive disease’, ‘compulsion plus obsession’, etc (see pp 4-7 in the pamphlet “*44 Questions*”).

Many newcomers have also been helped by discussion of various definitions of alcoholism, of the symptoms of the disease, of the uselessness of misdirected willpower in combating alcoholism, of the futility in insisting on an intellectual understanding of the condition *before* becoming willing to *practise* the AA program.

Since AA does not pretend to be a medical program, scientific information on the illness – for those who want it – must come from other sources. Three good ones are listed on p 43 of the pamphlet “*The AA Group*”.

### **#3            How It Works: The *Twelve Steps* Suggested as a Program of Recovery**

Many of us wonder when we first approach AA just *how it works*.

**That’s the title of Chapter V in the book “Alcoholics Anonymous”, of course. It is the heart of the AA message.**

Because the newcomer may have been told that “‘here are no musts in AA’, it seems wise to explain that these *suggested Steps* are a summary of actual past experience in recovery.

The men and women responsible for the Steps realised that they could never reach in person, many alcoholics who wanted their help. So they knew they had to be especially careful to use the words that would describe most honestly and completely the road they had taken.

Leaders of beginners’ meetings generally agree that newcomers are rarely helped by ponderous sermonising about the *Twelve Steps*, or by complicated interpretations. The Steps speak plainly for themselves, and all newcomers are, of course, free to interpret and use them as they individually choose.

It is the leader’s job to be sure that their exact wording is made available to the newcomer. While newcomers may not be in the mood for serious reading, the sooner they read the book “Alcoholics Anonymous” the better. Some groups give it away, others sell it, many keep a ‘lending library’ of AA books; some award the Big Book or “*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*” as a ‘door prize’.

### **#4            The *Twelve Traditions*: What we Learn from AA Mistakes**

The Traditions explain much of the seemingly contradictory behaviour that confuses newcomers when they first encounter a fellowship that functions with so little obvious organisation: ‘anonymity’ – and yet the occasional use of full names at meetings; ‘no dues or fees’ – and then the basket is passed.

A discussion of the origin of the Traditions, in relation to our earlier mistakes, can answer many questions and allay many anxieties for newcomers.

By relating their own experiences in using the Traditions, leaders can help newcomers understand the importance of principles before personalities, of anonymity at the public, print or broadcast level, of the group conscience, self-support, and AA’s non-affiliation with other organisations.

Know what AA does *not* do is as important for many of us as knowing what it *does* do, so that we will not expect more than AA can deliver. A list of services AA does not provide is given in the pamphlet “*AA in Your Community*”.



If leaders want to feel secure in their own understanding of the Traditions, it is recommended that they study carefully the books “Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions” and “AA Comes of Age”, plus the pamphlet “*The Twelve Traditions Illustrated*”.

## **#5 AA in Print – Service to Others**

**Most AA’s agree that newcomers are entitled to know about *all* the AA help available to them.**

Support materials include books, pamphlets and wallet cards, (also slides, video and audio tapes, and banners). AA Conference approved literature is distributed by the General Service Office of AA Australia, either locally published or imported from AA World Services Inc, and obtainable directly or through local Central Service or Intergroup Offices. A large range of various kinds of AA help is offered. It carefully reflects the broadest possible consensus of the entire movement, worldwide – not just some individual’s personal interpretation or some unique local view.

Pointing out what AA publications are, and what they contain, may be one of the finest services we can give to newcomers, because we are thereby encouraging them to dig out the answers for themselves.

Another gift of knowledge we can pass on to newcomers is information about our *Three Legacies of Service*, helping them to understand their own role as new links in our worldwide chain of love and service.

It is easy to explain just how AA is geared to serve alcoholics after reading about it in the pamphlet “*The AA Group*”. In addition, information about the General Service Structure appears in brief form in the folder “*Inside AA*”.

## **#6 Other Factors in AA Recovery**

In addition to the five suggestions above, many Groups report that their beginners’ meetings include discussions of these topics:

- 1 The original AA experience, as described in the books “Alcoholics Anonymous” and “AA Comes of Age”, and the capsule story of AA’s growth on pp 12-13 of “*44 Questions*”.
- 2 The desire to be sober for oneself.
- 3 Release from the compulsion and removal of the obsession.
- 4 Who can be a member of AA, and how to join. Many newcomers are greatly relieved at the absence of any official ritual, ‘signing up’, or other procedure for becoming an AA member (see p 27 of the pamphlet “*The AA Group*”). Anyone may attend *open* AA meetings. Membership in AA is open to anyone with a drinking problem. Dually addicted people are also eligible for AA membership, *if they have a drinking problem*.
- 5 Acceptance of facts about ourselves: self-honesty as the basis of the program.
- 6 The *Serenity Prayer*.
- 7 The *AA Slogans*.
- 8 Sponsorship: how to get a sponsor; how to change sponsors, if necessary. (See the pamphlet “*Questions and Answers on Sponsorship*”).
- 9 The family (see Chapters 8 and 9, “To Wives” and “The Family Afterward”, in “Alcoholics Anonymous”) and ways in which non-alcoholic relatives can get guidance in understanding alcoholism and thus helping the alcoholic (the *Al-Anon Family Groups* and *Alateen*).

- 10 The AA language. Most leaders of beginners' meetings agree that it is very important to explain any specialised AA jargon to newcomers. Indeed, it is essential to make all discussions at these meetings as simple and understandable as we can. Many newcomers arrive with no prior knowledge of AA and (as most of us recall from our own histories), few newcomers are mentally in the best shape for rapidly absorbing complex information or ideas.
- 11 Spiritual awakening. Ever since Ebby T first successfully twelfth-stepped Bill W (see "*Bill's Story*" in "*Alcoholics Anonymous*"). AA's have been encouraged to arrive at their *own* conception of AA recovery tools. For a discussion of the role of a spiritual awakening in recovery, see in "*Alcoholics Anonymous*" the chapters "We Agnostics", "Working with Others", "A Vision for You", and "Spiritual Experience"; "*Step Twelve*" in "*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*", pp 67-68 in "*AA Comes of Age*", plus the pamphlets "*44 Questions*" and "*Questions and Answers on Sponsorship*".
- 12 Are sedatives dangerous for alcoholics? (Refer to "*The AA Member – Medications and other Drugs*").

## SUGGESTIONS ON ARRANGEMENTS FOR BEGINNERS' MEETINGS

**Rotation of jobs in the group is considered highly valuable in AA (see "*The AA Group*" pp 16-17). After one member has led a series of beginners' meetings (anywhere from four to twelve – but six seems to be the favourite number), another leader rotates into the job for the next series. Many groups like to alternate between men and women as leaders, with a man leading one series, a woman the next.**

Other groups prefer that each beginners' meeting be led by a different member.

In those areas where AA's are most enthusiastic about the results of beginners' meetings, there seems to be general agreement on these ideas:

- 1 The meeting should be separate and apart from the regular open or closed meeting. In some localities, it is scheduled for one hour preceding a regular meeting. In others, the beginners' meeting is held at the regular meeting hour, either in a different room (where space permits) or on a different evening.
- 2 An intimate, informal atmosphere seems friendliest and encourages participation by the newcomer. With that aim in mind, the favourite arrangement has members seated around a large table.
- 3 Neither the leader nor any of the 'older in sobriety' members present should dominate the meeting. It is up to the leader to see that this does not turn into an ordinary discussion, with the more experienced talkers crowding the newcomer out.
- 4 The newcomer should feel welcome to participate, but never made to feel 'on the spot' or on the defensive by being asked questions.
- 5 An AA member should feel to attend the meetings and meet and help newcomers there.
- 6 Presenting the newcomer with a packet of basic recovery pamphlets and a current meeting list has been found helpful in some areas.

## AA CONFERENCE-APPROVED LITERATURE

The AA Guideline below is compiled from the experience of AA members in the various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the *Twelve Traditions* and the Australian and the US/Canada General Service Conferences.

### WHAT DOES CONFERENCE APPROVED MEAN?

Often members are confused about the meaning of the term '*Conference-Approved*' as it applies to AA literature. Does it mean that other literature is not approved? Who approves AA literature and how? What about the display of other literature at AA meetings? Such questions often trouble newcomers to AA as well as some members who are not so new.

The term '*Conference Approved*' indicates that the material so designated has been approved by the General Service Conference (GSC) of the issuing country. Where material has been issued by AA World Services, approval has been given by the US/Canada GSC.

Conference-Approved material always deals with the recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous or with information about the Fellowship. It is important to understand that the term does not imply disapproval of any material about AA or alcoholism published outside AA.

Any country's GSC may either adapt AA World Service material to local needs (with permission, of course), or approve new pamphlets if they are found necessary.

In order to become Conference-Approved (US/Canadian or any other GSC), a piece of literature or audio/visual material goes through a lengthy and painstaking process. The draft, first submitted to the appropriate committee of the Conference, may have to be rewritten many times before winning approval. The final work then expresses overall AA thinking on a particular subject, not just one person's or one Group's or one Area's opinion. In this sense, AA Conference-Approved Literature is created collectively.

When you see this symbol and explanatory line on a piece of literature, you know that it has weathered the whole process successfully:



This is Australian AA  
General Service  
Conference-Approved  
Literature



This is US/Canadian AA  
General Service  
Conference-Approved  
Literature

AA Conference-Approved Literature is copyrighted and permission to reprint must be obtained from AA World Services Inc or other appropriate source, in writing. For example, where the Australian General Service Conference has approved a piece of literature written and produced in this country, it is necessary to obtain permission to reprint from the Australian General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. Only in this way can we ensure the integrity of our literature and protect the AA program of recovery against dilution or distortion.

Some literature published by General Service Offices, such as 'service material', Guidelines and bulletins, does not go through the Conference-Approval process. The *Grapevine* (US/Canada) and "AA Around Australia" have received Conference-Approval in concept, but clearly it would be impractical to put every issue through such a complex procedure. *Grapevine* is published by a separate corporation, *AA Grapevine Inc*, which also holds the copyrights, so its approval must be sought before anything from the *Grapevine* is reprinted. Similarly for "AA Around Australia", which is published by the General Service Office of AA Australia.

AA Conference-Approved Literature may be purchased direct from the General Service Office where necessary; however, the usual source of supply is the various Central Service Offices (CSOs) throughout the country. Most AA Groups purchase and display Conference-Approved Literature, usually offering the pamphlets free of charge and selling the books and booklets. A 1972 Conference recommendation (reaffirmed in 1975) suggested that ". . . when a local AA facility (CSO, Area, Group, etc.) sells literature which has not been approved by Conference, it be clearly designated as such."

Following another Conference recommendation, most Groups separate AA and non-AA literature, often displaying them in different parts of the room. If AA literature were to be mixed with literature from other sources, the newcomer would be understandably confused about what is and what is not part of the AA programme.

The following recommendation was made by the 1977 General Service Conference: *"It is suggested that AA Groups be discouraged from selling literature not distributed by the GSO."* But let's be clear: the Conference cannot tell any AA member what he or she may or may not read, nor can it tell any AA Group what material it may or may not purchase, display and sell. The 1977 action is a recommendation only, but one that your Group might like to examine and discuss.

Your Group's literature display in general would make an interesting subject for a Group Conscience meeting. A good free-wheeling discussion might consider the following questions:

### **What does 'Conference-Approved' mean to us?**

If we display and sell non-AA Literature along with AA Literature, will we confuse the newcomer?

If we display and sell large quantities of literature from other sources, such as treatment centres, will we appear to be affiliating with those organisations?

### **Should we study *Tradition Six* more carefully?**

Does our supply of Conference-Approved Literature meet all the needs of our Groups?.....of our newcomers?

Are we familiar with the whole range of our own literature?

## USE OF NAMES OF COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS OR SERVICES IN AA LITERATURE

Our Sixth Tradition cautions us against endorsing or lending the AA name to other organisations. This has sometimes been taken to mean AA materials should never use commercial names in any of its materials.

However, there are many situations when the use of a commercial name helps us in communicating useful information to members. Examples are the name of a hotel where a convention is being held, and certain computer applications, and electronic communication services and formats.

It is recommended that when the names of commercial products or services are used in AA materials that the following guidelines be observed:

1. We should use commercial names only when it is clearly helping us in our primary purpose of carrying the message to the suffering alcoholic.
2. We should avoid using commercial names in a way that would make a reasonable person presume AA was endorsing a product or implying an affiliation.
3. If there is a clear possibility that the use of a commercial name would be construed as an endorsement or affiliation, the name should be asterisked and the following note should be attached:

*Mention of commercial names in AA materials is for information only and does not imply an endorsement of or recommendation of any product or an affiliation with any organisation.*



# THE GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

## THE GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE - THE GSR

When you're a GSR you represent your Group at District and Area levels; thus, you are linking your home Group with AA as a whole. In the first instance, the job provides the means of exchanging information between individual Groups and the General Service Office, but responsibility goes much further than that. You transmit ideas and opinions as well as facts; through you, the group conscience of your Group becomes a part of the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship, as expressed in the Australian General Service Conference (GSC). And like everything else in AA, it works through a series of simple steps:

## GENERAL SERVICES

1. At District meetings you join with GSRs from other Groups. Perhaps you've already worked with a CSO where Groups band together to help alcoholics in your locality; well, your General Service District is the second link in an entirely different chain, which extends much further. Your District is one of several in a General Service Area. With your fellow GSRs you elect a District Committee Member, and the DCMs make up the Area Committee. Now do you just sit back and let your DCM take it from there? No! GSRs stay very much in action in each of the Areas in Australia.
2. You attend Area Assemblies as and when required. At the Election Assembly, along with the other GSRs and the DCMs from the Area, you elect committee office bearers and, every third year, your Area's Conference Delegate.
3. As the GSR is the link between Group and District, and the DCM is the link between District and Area, so the Delegate is the link between Area and Conference. Just as you rely on your Group for help in your personal recovery, so the Groups rely on the General Service Conference (GSC) to maintain the unity and strength of our Fellowship, our obligation to all the alcoholics of today and tomorrow. It's up to you to maintain two-way communication between your Group and the Conference via your DCM and your Delegate. That way you can ensure that your Group's feelings become a part of the consensus of opinion at the GSC each November. In return, you can enable your Group to benefit from that sharing of experience when your Delegate reports back after Conference is over.

## GROUP SERVICE

1. As GSR, you are the Group contact in the original sense too. Upon election, your name and address are sent (by you or your Group) to the Secretary of your Area Committee and to General Service Office (be sure to include the name of the GSR you are replacing, so the records won't become confused.) You will be listed as contact person for your Group at Area Committee and at General Service Office.

2. In return, General Service Office sends you the quarterly bulletin *"AA Around Australia"*. This bulletin contains news from all over this country, together with items of interest from overseas, and lists any new pieces of literature available. You then share this information with your Group.
3. Because you've made a special point of studying the information listed herein, you can help when your Group faces a problem involving one of the Traditions. You don't have to know all the answers - no one member possibly could - but you learn where to look for good suggestions drawn from the broad AA experience.
4. Thinking of Tradition Seven particularly, you work with the Group treasurer to remind your Group of its part in keeping all of AA self-supporting. You explain the Group Donation Plan concept (formerly known as the '60-30-10 Plan' – see the free service pamphlet *"Group Donation Plans"* available from General Service Office or your CSO) for financial support of your CSO, General Service Office, Area Committee, and the Birthday and Action Clubs for individual contributions.
5. Since you're in touch with AA throughout your Area, you can bring your Group news of upcoming Area events. As GSR, you share with your fellow members the joy of widening AA horizons.

## INFORMATION YOU'LL NEED

1. **On the General Service structure:** the *"Australian AA Service Manual"*, *"Twelve Concepts for World Service"* and the video *"Circles of Love and Service"*.
2. **On the Traditions:** *"Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions"*, *"AA Comes of Age"*, *"The AA Tradition - How It Developed"* and *"The Twelve Traditions Illustrated"*.
3. **On Group affairs:** *"The AA Group Handbook"*, the pamphlet *"Group Donation Plans"* and the *"AA Guidelines"*.

## WHEN YOUR GROUP ELECTS A GSR

As GSRs are the very foundation of our General Service structure, the GSR is probably the most important job in AA. Through your GSR, your Group's voice is heard at District meetings, at Area Assemblies and eventually at the Australian General Service Conference. Through your GSR, your Group is strengthened by sharing the experience of other Groups, just as your own sobriety is strengthened by sharing the experience of other AA members.

## WHEN AND HOW

1. The term of a GSR is two years. This coincides with the terms of the Area's other trusted servants, the DCMs and the Delegate. So a Group usually elects its GSR before the Assembly at which the Area Committee is elected. January is a good month, if it can be arranged, since that gives the new GSR time to study the responsibilities of the job before taking office on 1st March.



2. An informed Group enjoys a special election meeting, at which a member with a solid background in service work explains the function of the GSR and a video from General Service Office may be shown.
3. Procedures for electing a GSR are the same as for any other Group servant, having regard to *Three Legacies* or other normal Group procedure.
4. Prompt notification about your choice of GSR is essential. If your Area Committee and GSO do not have your new GSR's name and address, communication breaks down.
5. At the same election meeting it is important to elect an Alternate GSR, perhaps the runner-up in the GSR ballot. The two work together closely, the Alternate becoming a knowledgeable deputy if the GSR is unable to attend a District or Area meeting.
6. What happens if your Group's GSR is elected DCM for your District? Then the Alternate automatically becomes your GSR, an extra reason for care in filling both offices.

## THE MAKING OF A GOOD GSR

1. Two or three years of sobriety are generally the desired minimum, although length of sobriety alone is not necessarily a qualification. It is also important that you should not hold office in any other Group.
2. Prior AA service experience provides a long head start for a GSR. Consider former Group officers and members who have shouldered responsibility at your CSO or on special committees (PI, Treatment and Correctional Facilities etc).
3. The same character qualities that mark a good trusted servant of any sort - patience, understanding and a firm determination . . . to place principles before personalities".
4. Most future Conference Delegates will come from the ranks of today's GSRs, so careful choice now will ensure good representation for your whole Area in years to come and continuing vitality for our GSC, the heart of our Co-Founders' *Three Legacies* to all AA.

## BILL W ON GENERAL SERVICES AND THE GSR

*An AA service is anything whatever that helps us reach a fellow sufferer, ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent telephone call and a cup of coffee, and to our General Service Office for worldwide AA work. The sum total of these is our Three Legacies of Service. Whether performed by individuals or Groups or Areas or AA as a whole, these activities are vital to our existence and growth. Nor can we make AA more simple by abolishing such services. To do so would only be asking for complication and confusion. Among the most vital, yet probably least understood, group of services are those that help us function as a whole - the work of the General Service Office<sup>†</sup> and the General Service Board (the trustees). Our worldwide unity and much of our growth since early times are directly traceable to them. To get the benefit of direct guidance from AA as a whole, the General Service Conference was formed. These delegates sit yearly with our trustees and the staff of the GSO. The Conference has proved itself an immense success. Over the years, its record of achievement has been completely convincing. The strength of our whole AA service structure starts with the Group and with the General Service Representative the Group elects. I cannot emphasise too strongly the importance of the GSR.*

<sup>†</sup>(General Service Office, also, in Australia)



## INFORMATION ON ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

This information is for those who may themselves have a drinking problem and for those in contact with persons who have, or are suspected of having, such a problem. Most of the information is available in more detail in literature, and a list of recommended pamphlets and Guidelines is given at the end of this paper. This paper tells what to expect from Alcoholics Anonymous; it describes what AA is, what AA does and what AA does not do.

### WHAT IS AA?

Alcoholics Anonymous is an international fellowship of men and women who once had a drinking problem. It is non-professional, self-supporting, non-denominational, multi-racial and non-political. There are no age or educational requirements - membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about his or her drinking problem. Our *Third Tradition* states quite clearly "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking." Just as clear is the implied converse, that is, anyone who doesn't have a desire to stop drinking cannot become a member. That statement leads to a fact which is not always clearly understood: we cannot help anyone who does not want help. Whether or not that person **needs** help is irrelevant - the victim must **want** help.

### WHAT DOES AA DO?

1. AA members share their experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem; they give person-to-person service or 'sponsorship' to the alcoholic coming to AA from any source.
2. Our programme, set down in our *Twelve Steps*, offers the alcoholic a way to develop a satisfying life without alcohol.
3. This programme is discussed at AA Group meetings:
  - a) Open 'identification' meetings - open to anyone, alcoholic or not. At 'ID' meetings, AA members tell their stories; they describe their experiences with alcohol, how they came to AA and how their lives have changed as a result. (Attendance at an open AA meeting is a good introduction to AA, to learn what AA is, what it does and what it does not do.)
  - b) Open discussion meetings - one member speaks briefly about his or her drinking experience and then leads a discussion on any subject or drinking-related problem anyone brings up.
  - c) Closed meetings are for members of AA and anyone who has, or thinks they have, a drinking problem. They are conducted in the same way as their equivalent open meetings but, as stated, attendance is restricted to members of AA or people who have, or think they have, a drinking problem.
  - d) Step meetings (usually closed) - discussion on the *Twelve Steps of AA*.
  - e) AA members also take meetings into prisons, hospitals, rehabs and the like.

- f) AA members are sometimes asked to conduct informative meetings about AA to hospital staff, Rotary, Apex and similar organisations ('Public Information' or 'PI' meetings). Such meetings about AA are not part of AA's recovery programme.

## MEMBERS FROM COURT PROGRAMMES AND TREATMENT FACILITIES

For many years now, AA Groups have welcomed an influx of many new members from court programmes and treatment facilities. Some have come to AA voluntarily, others under some degree of pressure. To quote the pamphlet *"How AA Members Co-operate"*:

*We cannot discriminate against any prospective member, even if he or she comes to us under pressure from a court, an employer or any other agency.*

*Although the strength of our programme lies in its voluntary nature, many of us first attended meetings because we were forced to or persuaded to, either by someone else or by inner discomfort. Nevertheless, repeated exposure to AA demonstrated to us the true nature of our illness. AA has no interest in why a person comes to AA, nor whether their attendance is voluntary or not - our concern is for the problem drinker, from whatever source. We cannot predict who will recover, nor have we the authority to direct how recovery should be sought by any other alcoholic.*

## PROOF OF ATTENDANCE AT AA MEETINGS

Sometimes courts or agencies ask for proof of attendance at AA meetings. The following methods have proved to be satisfactory:

1. With the consent of the prospective member, the AA Group Secretary signs or initials a slip furnished by the court;
2. The court furnishes AA with envelopes which can be made available to anyone, on request, at the close of an AA meeting. The individual mails the envelope to the court with his or her name and address, as proof of attendance;
3. Some AA Groups have sheets of paper with the name and address of the Group. At the end of the meeting anyone wishing to sign the sheet may do so. The Secretary mails this. This reporting of attendance is not part of AA procedure. Each attendee reports on himself or herself at the request of the referring agency. Thus, no AA member is revealing another's identity and none of this information is available for publication.
4. Signing cards validating that a person has attended an AA meeting is at the discretion of individual groups. Doing so does not contravene any Tradition and enhances the principle of co-operation without affiliation.

## THE NON-ALCOHOLIC ADDICT

Many treatment centres today combine alcohol and other drug addiction under 'substance abuse' or 'chemical dependence'. Patients, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, are introduced to AA and encouraged to attend AA on the 'outside' when discharged from the centre. As stated earlier, anyone may attend open AA meetings, but only persons with a drinking problem may attend closed meetings or become members of AA. People with dual or multiple addictions are eligible for AA membership only if one of their addictions is to alcohol. When they are invited to share at a meeting they are asked to restrict their talk to the alcohol-related part of their life.

## WHAT AA DOES NOT DO

AA does not:

- furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover
- solicit members
- engage in research
- join councils of social agencies
- follow up or try to control its members
- compile a register of members
- make medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses
- provide drying-out or nursing services, hospitalisation, drugs or any medical or psychiatric treatment
- offer religious services
- engage in education about alcohol
- provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money or any other welfare or social services
- provide domestic or vocational counselling
- accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-AA sources
- provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, etc.

## CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of AA is to carry our message of recovery to the alcoholic seeking help. Almost every alcoholism treatment tries to help the alcoholic to maintain sobriety; regardless of the road we follow, we all head for the same destination - rehabilitation of the alcoholic person. Together we can do what none of us could accomplish alone.

## RECOMMENDED MATERIAL AVAILABLE FROM ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

### PAMPHLETS:

- *"A Member's Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous"*
- *"How AA Members Co-operate with Professionals"*
- *"If You Are a Professional"*
- *"Problems Other Than Alcohol"*
- *"Understanding Anonymity"*
- *"Is AA for You?"*

### GUIDELINES:

- *"For AA Members Employed in the Field of Alcoholism"* Guideline GL-17
- *"Public Information & Co-operation with the professional Community"* GL-07
- *"Forming Local Committee on Co-operation with the professional Community"* GL-19
- *"Court and Similar Programs"* GL-08
- *"AA and Industry"* GL-21
- *"Treatment & Correctional Facilities Committees"* GL-16

### For copies and further information contact:

General Service Office: 48 Firth Street, Arncliffe, NSW 2205

Phone: 02 9599 8866

Email: [gso@aa.org.au](mailto:gso@aa.org.au)

Website: [www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au)

# AUSTRALIAN GENERAL SERVICE STRUCTURE SIMPLIFIED

## WHY DO WE NEED A GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE?

The late Bernard B Smith, non-alcoholic, then Chairman of the North American Board of Trustees, and one of the architects of the Conference structure, answered that question completely in his opening talk at the 1954 meeting in New York:

*We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined to alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in AA that rebirth which brought us back to life.*

*We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effect of the human urge for power and prestige which we must ensure can never invade AA. We need it to protect AA against government while insulating it from anarchy; we need it to protect AA against disintegration yet prevent over-integration. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous, and Alcoholics Anonymous alone, is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps, its Twelve Traditions and all of its services.*

*We need it to ensure that changes within AA come only as a response to the needs and the wants of all AA, not of any few. We need it to ensure that the doors of the halls of AA never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need it to ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is.*

(Excerpt from "The "Australian AA Service Manual"", 5<sup>th</sup> Edition)

**You want to have a say about what goes on in Australian AA nationally? OK, then here's how you can do it:**

*Firstly, we are not dogmatic about many things in AA, but on one point a little dogmatism is necessary. You, the members, are AA. You, the members, are the boss. You say what shall be done and what shall not be done. Alcoholics Anonymous is a truly democratic fellowship; consequently, you are entitled to your say in every single aspect. Now read on.*

## **DOES YOUR GROUP HAVE A GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE (GSR)?**

The GSR is the member of your Group you elect to be the link between the Group and the Australian General Service Office, the Australian General Service Conference (GSC) and the General Service Board of Trustees (GSB) of AA in Australia. Sounds ominous? It's not.

## **WHAT DOES A GSR DO?**

He or she is responsible for ensuring that Group members are aware of the needs of General Service Office and encouraging the Group to support their General Service Office, CSO and Area financially. More and more Groups are implementing the 60-30-10, 50-30-10-10 or other contribution ratio Plan, and sending proportions of their surplus funds to the local Central Service Office (CSO), to General Service Office, to their Areas and to District. (See the *"Group Donation Plans"* pamphlet for details).

The GSR receives all mail from General Service Office, such as *"AA Around Australia"*, our quarterly news bulletin, and is responsible for giving members the opportunity to read this and all communication from General Service Office.

The GSR also attends District Meetings and Area Assemblies, to be the Group's voice on AA matters, to listen to other Groups and carry their views back to his/her own Group.

## **WHAT IS A DISTRICT?**

Experience has shown that an Area, especially in this vast country of ours, covers too much territory for consistent good communication. Consequently, Areas are divided up into 'geographically possible' Districts.

## **WHAT IS A DISTRICT MEETING?**

This is a meeting of the GSRs in the District. The meeting is held to share experience, discuss public information, internal procedures, problems etc, so that Groups know what each other is doing. There is so much to be done in AA that we cannot afford duplication of effort, and neither can we afford Groups to go separate ways - unity is an essential feature of all our operations. It is therefore an important function of the GSR to report back to the Group all that takes place at the District meeting.

## **WHAT IS A DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEMBER (DCM)?**

He/she is the member chosen to represent your District at the Area Committee Meeting and report back to you via your District Meeting.



## WHAT IS AN AREA COMMITTEE MEETING?

The Area Committee Meeting comprises the DCMs, the Area Delegate and Alternate, to discuss activities, problems and progress in their respective Districts, exchange ideas and co-ordinate services.

## WHAT IS AN AREA ASSEMBLY?

An Area Assembly comprises the GSRs of the Area, the Area Committee, the Area Delegate and Alternate. The Assembly is the mainspring of the Conference structure, the democratic voice of the Fellowship expressing its wishes. Assemblies are the responsibility of the Area Committee and are conducted by its Chairperson. Assemblies may be held as often as the Area wishes and it is here that the Delegate to the GSC is elected. Experience has shown that the Election Assembly should be held soon after Conference but no later than January; the outgoing Delegate can then use that Assembly to report on the business of Conference to his or her Area.

## WHAT IS A CONFERENCE DELEGATE?

A Conference Delegate is the person elected by the Area Assembly to represent the Area at the annual GSC (i.e. the Area Delegate).

## WHAT DOES A CONFERENCE DELEGATE DO?

A Delegate serves one three year term only and attends the GSC each November during that time. Once having served such a term, he/she is not eligible to serve as Delegate again. The Delegate raises any points as required by the Area, may speak for or against any motion, join in all discussion, and may vote on all issues. However, possibly one of the most important aspects of the job is to report back to you, the members, via the Area Assembly and the GSRs, and personally wherever possible.

Being a Conference Delegate is time-consuming, so when electing your Delegate, make sure he/she has the necessary time available. The Delegate should be prepared to attend all Area and Regional service meetings and assemblies, as well as week-end get-togethers held in the Area and, maybe, some held in adjacent Areas.

The Delegate needs to be well versed in service literature such as the "Australian AA Service Manual", the "Twelve Concepts for World Service" and, of course, the "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions".



## REGIONAL FORUMS

The purpose of Regional Forums is to meet a need in our ever-growing Fellowship and provide a special opportunity of direct communication and personal contact between AA members in a Region and service personnel such as Board members, Conference members and General Service Office staff wherever possible.

Program, location, format etc., are worked out jointly by the Regional Trustee, the Area Delegates and the General Service Office. The responsibility for making the physical arrangements is assumed by a host city contact working with the Regional Trustee and the General Service Office.

These forums are intended simply as a way of providing better communication between AA service workers and their General Service Board and General Service Office. They are really sharing sessions, and in no sense affect the role of the annual General Service Conference, which remains the decision-making body within AA. The forums air many feelings, voice many opinions, answer many questions and make many suggestions, but make no decisions. Naturally, ideas expressed at the forums can be presented to the General Service Conference for consideration.

At the General Service Conference, Delegates, staff members and Trustees have an opportunity for personal contact and a chance to clarify questions and share valuable experience. The purpose of Regional Forums is to provide – closer to home – similar direct contact and sharing among all who are active in, or interested in, service work of one kind or another.

If a Region wishes the attendance of staff or Board members at a forum, the General Service Board will pay up to two full fares per forum per Region per year, for any invited guest from any of the following categories, and will reimburse any reasonable out of pocket expenses that are backed by appropriate documentation:

- General Service Office staff member;
- International Delegate;
- Non-alcoholic Trustee;
- Other Regional or General Service Trustee.

Other invited guests are funded by the Forum Committee.

Conference recommends that guests invited to Regional Forums should actively participate relative to their service position.

Conference recommends that priority should be given to representatives of the General Service Structure to actively participate at Regional Forums.

From 2003 Regional Forums must be bid for by Areas two years in advance at the General Service Conference, with full approval from the Area concerned beforehand.

The program is flexible enough to be adjusted to any needs that may arise during the meeting. Generally the meeting will run from Friday evening until noon Sunday. The success of the forum depends upon participation – upon free and open sharing.

Please come prepared to share the questions that concern you and your Group, District or Area.

All AA members are welcome to attend and may obtain a registration/accommodation form from the host Region or General Service Office.



## GUIDELINE NO GL-07

## PUBLIC INFORMATION AND CO-OPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

The goal of AA Public Information and Co-operation with the Professional Community (PI&CPC) is to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. This is achieved in two ways, through informing the general public about the AA programme and through reaching "the third person", whose work is or may be involved with the active alcoholic. The "Public Information Workbook: incorporating activities of co-operation with the professional community" ("PI Workbook") is very useful, and is available from your CSO or direct from General Service Office.

In 2003, the Australian General Service Conference decided to support the appointment of a National PI Coordinator, reporting to the Trustees' PI&CPC Committee. General duties will be to coordinate the National PI Forum and to collect and disseminate PI&CPC information at national level.

### AA'S MOVEMENT- WIDE PUBLIC INFORMATION POLICY

In all public relationships, AA'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 them, 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 an 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 AA are equally concerned with the serious problem of alcoholism.

### LOCAL PI & CPC COMMITTEES

There are many local committees, and contacts who carry the message via local newspapers and media. PI & CPC Committees also contribute sharing to *"AA Around Australia"*. Between the General Service Board (GSB) and local committees there is a good exchange of experience. The General Service Office is in regular correspondence with local PI & CPC Committees whose ideas, activities and suggestions are relayed in these Guidelines and in *"AA Around Australia"*. In turn, the Board committee provides TV and radio announcements on AA, news releases, special pamphlets, leaflets, flyers and service material for use at the local level. Host Committees of National Conventions and Regional Forums also provide local media with opportunities to take an interest in AA activities, and expertise from local committee work is invaluable in planning for these.

### FINANCING

Usually, the cost of doing PI&CPC service work is met from the general contributions to whatever body forms the committee – Group, other unit of the General Service structure (District, Area) or Central Service Office. When a new committee is in a locality with a sparse AA population, members of neighbouring Groups may be called upon for special contributions. Even in Areas where AA is firmly established through a large population, Groups may be asked to contribute to certain special projects; for example, an effort to supply all local libraries with copies of the 'Big Book'.

## GETTING STARTED

Once a committee is formed, it is a good idea to decide in advance just who is going to do what, in order to avoid friction and duplication of effort. An example of good co-operation was offered by an Area Assembly: "We should keep in mind that our purpose should be to assist and suggest to the District PI & CPC Committees and not to replace them." The Area Committee concentrated on these aims by seeing that there was a steady exchange of experience among the smaller units; maintaining a list of available AA speakers for the whole Area; handling PI contacts with Area newspapers and radio and TV stations.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The first qualification for doing PI & CPC, or any other service work is, of course, a period of continuous sobriety, the period being defined by those responsible for setting up the committee. Often, committee members include those whose job experience is in the communications media, public relations or one of the professions, but such a background is not, however, essential. All committee members do need to be thoroughly familiar with the AA programme and to be able to provide accurate information about the Fellowship. Additionally, an understanding of all of the Traditions and, in particular, a firm grasp of the anonymity Tradition, are vital. The pamphlet "*Understanding Anonymity*" and the *Anonymity Wallet Card* are useful in making the AA anonymity principle clear to the public. Remember, it is not a break of Tradition Eleven when, in private conversation, you identify yourself as an AA member with non-AAs encountered in the course of PI work.

## BASIC FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

In embarking on PI & CPC projects committees sometimes divide the responsibilities in advance. A large committee may name sub-committees to cover specific fields such as newspapers, talks to non-AA groups, etc. In smaller committees, a single member may volunteer to work with a given field.

Of course, meetings provide continuous sharing; if there is rotation in these individual or sub-committee assignments, new people can draw upon predecessors' experience. Often neighbouring PI & CPC committees hold joint meetings at intervals, or send individual members to attend the other committees' regular meetings. In some areas, a Central Service PI & CPC committee and a PI & CPC connected with a General Service unit may pool their efforts and work together. These two entities then share joint expenses. Co-ordination between PI & CPC and Treatment and Correctional Facilities committees is important to all in carrying the AA message effectively, and avoiding duplications.

## NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

The "*PI Workbook*" will be of help in giving practical suggestions for working with daily newspapers, including those in a foreign language, weekly newspapers (including suburban publications), local magazines and newsletters, local professional and trade magazines, company house bulletins, church publications and local radio and TV stations.

## TELEVISION

Effective ways to approach key people at local TV stations are also included in the “[PI Workbook](#)”, together with material useful for TV and various methods to protect the anonymity of people who appear on TV as members of Alcoholics Anonymous. TV Community Announcements are available from General Service Office.

## RADIO

This medium has several advantages:

- 1 lower costs.
- 2 it has a wider range, covering places where TV reception is unsatisfactory and/or there are no local channels;
- 3 it appeals to Groups hard to reach by other means, such as people in deprived areas;
- 4 ease in preserving anonymity when AA members are on the air. It is suggested that a representative variety of average members be used on the air. Radio Community Announcements are available from General Service Office for use by local committees. These tapes are made up of six 30-second announcements.

## PUBLIC AWARENESS MEETINGS

Also known as community meetings, PI meetings, or information meetings, prove to be an effective way of carrying the message in towns or cities. The “[PI Workbook](#)” outlines the sort of programme commonly presented, as well as a sample announcement for inviting newspaper, radio, TV representatives, professionals or the general public. The personal approach to public meetings is favoured by many committees. “For AA members” said one committee, “the ticket of admission was ‘Bring a non-alcoholic with you’”.

## SPEAKING TO OUTSIDE GROUPS

The pamphlet “*Speaking at Non-AA Meetings*”, designed specifically to help in this service work, includes an outline and other ideas for the content of such talks. Most committees emphasise the importance of a question and answer period. “*Speaking at Non-AA Meetings*” includes lists of questions frequently asked so that speakers will be ready with satisfactory answers. In PI&CPC work, an exchange of talks is an interesting idea. To improve AA's relations with the growing number of local alcoholism agencies, a series of “awareness meetings” could be arranged in which each organisation could be asked to provide a speaker to give a 10 minute explanatory talk on what that agency does. AA, in turn, could provide a speaker to give the AA message. Ample time could be allowed for discussion.

## LITERATURE

Displays of AA literature may be set up at public meetings, talks to outside groups, conventions of outside groups and health fairs. Flyers such as *"AA at a Glance"* and *"A Message to Teenagers"* are available to committees in quantity, at one or two cents each, specifically for distribution during speaking engagements. Public libraries offer wide opportunity and may welcome AA books and booklets, along with these and other pamphlets. Additionally, PI & CPC committees have provided AA literature for the libraries of schools, colleges, businesses and more. Similar outlets are bookmobiles, hospital reading carts and literature racks at churches.

## CARDS AND SIGNS

These are often used to offer the telephone number of the nearest CSO, Groups or AA contact, depending upon the size of the community, or to give the times and places of nearby meetings. Cards may be used in police stations, doctors' surgeries, etc, whilst the road sign is very eye catching to the AA traveller looking for a contact; it also serves the dual purpose of declaring to all that AA is available to anyone who wants it.

## TELEPHONE DIRECTORIES

Sometimes the local PI & CPC Committee is responsible for the AA listing in the phone book (including the Yellow Pages).

## LETTERS

In addition to using the mails for sending releases to newspapers and for announcing public meetings, a PI & CPC Committee may direct mailings to a specific group (such as students) to call their attention to AA as a resource. This step is especially common when a committee has just been set up and few contacts have been made. AA literature is often enclosed with the letters. These letters may point out the availability of AA speakers and explain how such talks may be arranged. Careful planning is needed in writing letters to ensure that AA will be presented accurately and will exercise the "attraction" mentioned in Tradition Eleven. Thank you letters are usually sent to media when they have featured AA material, as well as to anyone who has welcomed AA speakers.

## LUNCHEONS

The gratitude luncheon is another way of thanking non-AAs who have given a PI & CPC 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 that the seating arrangement should alternate hosts and guests, to give the latter a chance to meet some live examples of recovery in AA. See Guideline GL-25 *"Public Information: Convening Luncheons / Dinners"*.



## INFORMING THE FELLOWSHIP

Though the 'public' in 'public information' refers to non-AAs, many local PI & CPC Committees consider that keeping the Fellowship itself informed is also among their responsibilities. Building wider understanding of the *Twelve Traditions* among AA Groups is a common activity and special meetings are often held for this purpose. Committees everywhere have been successful in explaining the PI & CPC applications of *Tradition Eleven*. Some AAs once tended to oppose any PI & CPC work as promotion, but such confusion is now rare. Many PI & CPC committees provide local members with full, precise reports on all their activity in the area. This is an excellent way to enlist the co-operation of local Groups in planned projects.

In 2007, Conference approved the establishment of a Service Website, to facilitate sharing inside the Fellowship of resources, notices, experience, strength and hope for all *trusted servants* working in any area of AA Service. The more members share, the richer will this new resource be.

Information can be disseminated through:

- The AA Service Website <http://aaservice.org.au/members/>  
Send articles, news, reports, notices or other forms of sharing about any kind of Service work to [editor@aaservice.org.au](mailto:editor@aaservice.org.au) (other features of this site include an Ask-it Basket, discussion forums, AA links, AA events and resources for download, to all of which members are invited to contribute).
- Contact the PI Coordinator (or the Treatment & Correctional Coordinator if relevant or both) if you need information or assistance with communicating wider than your local area. Contact [nationalpi@aaservice.org.au](mailto:nationalpi@aaservice.org.au) (or [nationaltcf@aaservice.org.au](mailto:nationaltcf@aaservice.org.au)).
- A PI & CPC section in a local AA bulletin.
- Publishing in the local newspaper (or mailing to Groups), a chart showing all completed projects in a given year. For instance, listing the types of outside groups that requested speakers, with the approximate size of audiences for each.
- Visiting local Groups to give brief talks about PI & CPC. Each member may agree to cover certain Groups.
- Setting up PI & CPC workshops at assemblies, conventions and other AA get-togethers.
- Inviting members of local AA Groups to attend a special meeting on PI & CPC. Rather than sending the invitations by mail or asking Group secretaries to make the announcements, the committee may assign its own members to visit the Groups.
- Informing local Groups when a TV or radio programme produced with the co-operation of the PI & CPC committee is about to be aired.
- Email networks
- The Internet: the National website ([www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au)) has an events noticeboard, and some CSOs have similar facilities.
- The quarterly newsletter, "*AA Around Australia*".



## COURT AND SIMILAR PROGRAMS

### WHAT KINDS OF PROGRAMS DOES THIS GUIDELINE COVER?

For many years, AA members have been co-operating with various law-enforcement officials in order to carry the AA message into places where it is needed. At first, this involved only correctional facilities, where thousands of alcoholics found and now enjoy the AA way of life. Today, the principles of co-operation learned in that experience are being used in other ways. AA members began helping magistrates, judges and other court officials (in both criminal and in family courts) by carrying the AA message into courtrooms. There, AA prospects are often required by the court (not by AA) to listen to the AA message. As a result, many alcoholics introduced to AA this way, albeit unwillingly, are now happily sober. AA members' activities in such programmes are described in this Guideline. In more recent years, in some countries, 'safe driving' programmes have been set up for drivers in trouble with the law because of incidents related to drinking. In those countries, AA members have helped and are helping such drivers get at least a chance to learn about AA and discover whether or not they are ready for it. Many are now happy members of AA as a result.

### ARE THESE PROGRAMS EFFECTIVE?

To quote members who have participated: "Practical experience shows that nothing will so much ensure 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" . . . "Co-operate; never criticise." These are the comments of AA's first members to the rest of us. ("Alcoholics Anonymous" Chapter 7: "Working with Others").

Therefore, as long as carrying the message helps those of us already in AA to maintain our own sobriety, any kind of message-carrying is a success for us. Our responsibility is to make the seed of AA freely available: what the sufferer does with it is not our responsibility. To quote one of our many clichés, we carry the message, not the alcoholic. We cannot claim credit for success, nor take blame for failure if failure it is - the alcoholic may not reach for help until we have departed. But in AA we do not measure success in terms of how many people we sober up, nor brag about our success in helping people. Instead, we try to be grateful for being invited to carry our message to anyone, anywhere, because that helps us. AA members who have been co-operating with court and similar programmes have given us many statistics about the numbers of alcoholics brought into AA as a result, but only one statistic interests us in AA - the next person who may need our help.

The final phrase of the Preamble, *"Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety"* is clearly directed to the individual - the objective of helping other alcoholics is second only to maintaining personal sobriety.

Similarly, *Tradition Five* is just as clearly directed to the Group - any Group of AA; that includes the single Group where we all meet and share, the Districts where GSRs meet, the Areas where Districts meet, and top of the list, the Annual General Conference, the Group Conscience of Australia. At all levels, our primary purpose is “. . . to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers”.

*Tradition Three* states plainly and simply that “The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.” It is unequivocal and not capable of being ‘interpreted’ - anyone, **anyone**, who asks us for help is entitled, by our own traditions, to get it, whatever his/her station in life. That unqualified statement most obviously includes those who have been sentenced by the legal system for their illegal behaviour.

## WHAT BASIC ELEMENTS ARE COMMON TO NON-AA PROGRAMMES?

In most cases, this general outline is followed by all court and similar programmes for alcoholic offenders:

- 1 Pre-trial interview
- 2 Release, conviction, or case continued (if conviction, sentence or probation is next)
- 3 Classes on alcoholism, regular (outside the court) AA meetings, or incarceration.

## WHERE CAN AA MEMBERS BE OF SERVICE AND HOW?

- 1 **Pre-trial interview:** acting as private individuals, not as representatives of AA as a whole, AA members can talk to the person in trouble if the magistrate permits. Sometimes, the interview is conducted by a probation officer, who may use assistance from AA volunteers.
- 2 **Release, conviction or continuance:** if the arrested person is released, he or she may be required by the judge to go to AA. If the offender is convicted, the sentence may be suspended and the person put on probation, depending on the magistrate and local customs.
- 3 **Classes on alcoholism, AA meetings or gaol:** the offender under suspended sentence or on probation may be required by the magistrate to attend meetings of one type or another. The court class usually meets in the court building and may be one of three types:
  - a. it may be run exactly like any AA meeting, by AA members, but in reality it is a meeting about AA, not a regular AA meeting. Sometimes an officer of the court presides;
  - b. the court class may be handled by several agencies. For example, a doctor may explain that alcoholism is a disease, or various other professionals and/or volunteers may describe some of the characteristics of alcoholism, eg symptoms, behaviour patterns, mood swings and the like. Usually, at least one session is turned over to AA members, who put on a ‘sample’ AA meeting. They tell their own stories briefly, but more importantly, they relate how AA works. AA members experienced at this say it is very important never to be argumentative, nor critical of anything. These classes seem to work best when the speakers are not AA fanatics but are tolerant and good-natured - that is, when they make the AA way of life seem attractive. AA members say it is also very important to be sure lots of AA literature is on hand at each session.

- c. in some Domestic Relations or Family Courts, there are also sample Al-Anon and Alateen meetings held for the spouse and children of the offender. These are separate from the AA meetings, of course. It is important to explain each time the difference between these court classes and regular (outside) Al-Anon or Alateen meetings.

## MEETINGS OUTSIDE THE COURT

Sometimes meetings of types a) and c) become so big that they lead to the formation of new "outside" Groups, that is, regular AA or Al-Anon Groups which meet outside the court building and choose a new name showing no relation to the court. In some regions magistrates may require offenders to attend regular AA meetings outside the courtroom as a condition of the suspended sentence or probation. In such cases the offenders may be required to provide proof that they have attended the required number of meetings. How this can be done within AA traditions is explained below.

## SOME OF THE PROBLEMS THAT MAY ARISE:

- 1 **Lack of support:** Many AA members simply are not aware that this kind of *Twelfth Step* work is available, nor that they can participate in it. In some regions there is a central advisory committee established by the court, or there may be an AA Court Committee set up by interested members. The AA committees usually meet monthly to iron out problems and to make sure enough AA volunteers are available. It is up to the individual AA members who co-operate with such programmes to carry the message of this experience to other members, so that all members in the community understand this kind of *Twelfth Step* work and how to take part in it.
- 2 **Misunderstanding** by AA members and by the offenders: Sometimes members are upset when they hear of these projects; some of the things they complain of are:
  - a. **Too many newcomers to AA;** occasionally, when such a programme first starts, one small regular AA Group may find more newcomers at its meetings than regular members, and members may resent their Group being 'invaded'. This has been solved in several ways:
    - i. in some Areas, if many newcomers turn up under court sentence, the Group divides into small 'buzz' sessions, and a few regulars sit with each set of newcomers for discussion;
    - ii. or this may be the signal to hold a meeting with the magistrates and/or court officials to see about setting up courtroom classes or meetings in the court building about AA. After learning of AA in this way, the offenders are then free to attend meetings of regular AA Groups if they want to.

- 3 ***The mistaken impression*** that such programmes affiliate AA in some way with outside enterprises, or constitute endorsement by AA of a court or similar programme. When properly handled by the members involved, co-operation with these programmes no more constitutes affiliation or endorsement than do AA meetings held in hospitals and prisons. This misapprehension need not arise if it is always made clear, repeatedly, that AA is not affiliated with any other enterprise.

It should also be explained that court classes, or meetings *about* AA, are different from regular AA meetings. It should be explained, clearly, that because AA is self-supporting, AA Groups do not accept rent-free meeting rooms, refreshments, or literature furnished by any non-AA source. It should also be made clear that regular AA groups do not force attendance, nor keep attendance records, but that courts can and sometimes do require these things to be done.

For many older AAs, it is like seeing a dream come true when an increasing number of courts use AA as a place to send sick alcoholics, instead of using the old revolving-door punishment. AA, naturally, cannot "... endorse any cause ..." but courts are not bound by the AA Traditions and thus are free to endorse AA if they so wish, and we are grateful that so many do.

- 4 ***Mandatory attendance*** at AA meetings: all of us sober in AA 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 by or for anybody else. Yet, in a very real sense, it could be said that every member of AA was first 'sentenced' to AA, not by a court, certainly, but by his or her own inner suffering - we would not come to AA until we had to. Only after our first contact did many of us decide we really wanted AA for ourselves.

So, we are not concerned about who or what first sends the alcoholic to us, nor how. Our responsibility is to show AA as such an attractive way of life that all newcomers who need it soon want it.

- 5 ***The hostile attitude*** of some who are required by a law-enforcement agency to attend AA meetings: just as many of us now happily sober in AA did at first, some of these newcomers approach AA very resentful at having to be there. If we remember our own attitudes at the outset, this is very easy to understand, and it calls for our compassion, not resentment. It is up to the more mature members of the Group to provide examples of patience, tolerance and goodwill toward the sick and angry newcomer. It is simple to explain to such newcomers that we understand their feelings because so many of us felt the same way at our introduction to AA.

In any case, we in AA cannot afford resentment of any newcomer's fear, ignorance or antagonism.

- 6 ***Proof of attendance*** at AA meetings: it is important for the courts to understand that attendance at AA meetings does not guarantee anybody's future sobriety. Nevertheless, courts sometimes require legal, written proof that offenders have attended a certain number of meetings. In most cases, the Group Secretary (or other Group officer) is happy to sign or initial a slip furnished by the court saying so-and-so was at the such-and-such meeting on a particular date. Since this is not at the level of newspapers, magazines, TV, radio or movies, no break of Tradition Eleven, on anonymity, is effected by signing such a document.

In some areas, the court furnishes co-operating AA Groups with sealed, stamped envelopes addressed to the court. (There may or may not be anything inside the envelope - it doesn't matter.) The secretary of the Group announces at each meeting that he or she has the envelopes and anybody needing one can get it after the meeting. All the offender has to do is take the envelope, privately write his/her own name and/or return address on it, and mail it. This gives the court proof the offender was at some AA meeting, and the only name involved is that of the offender.

In other Areas, each co-operating Group has a sheet, furnished by the court, showing the AA Group name and meeting date. The Secretary announces at each meeting that such a sheet is available and offenders sign it after the meeting. Then the secretary mails the sheet (in an envelope furnished by the referring court, clinic, employer, union or other agency) to the agency sending prospects to AA. Thus it is not the AA Group but the prospect's own signature - readily checked for verification - which affirms he/she was at the meeting. Most courts and agencies are glad to work out such systems for AA co-operation.

Such procedures help make the following facts clear to the offender:

- a. AA is not part of the court;
- b. it is the law enforcement agency which requires attendance, not AA;
- c. it is not AA which reports anyone's attendance at the meeting; rather, it is the offender who reports him/herself.

However, it is important to note that an Advisory Action of the 1985 Conference Committee on Public Information and Co-operation with the Professional Community (US/Canada) states: "AA does not provide letters of reference to lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc".

- 7 **Offers by law-enforcement agencies** to pay AA members for taking prospects to and from AA meeting: sometimes it is necessary for AA members to meet with court officials and explain that AA is strictly self-supporting and that AA members do not accept money for *Twelfth Step* work. Non-AA agencies do not necessarily understand, until we show them, that we work with other alcoholics for our own sobriety, not for money. It is our responsibility to make this clear to offenders, too. (Note: AA members who are employed to work as professionals in the field of alcoholism are, of course, a different matter, since they are paid for their professional services. Even so, they are not paid to do *Twelfth Step* work).
- 8 **The differences between AA and court and other such programmes:** naturally, these programmes aim to reduce the number of arrests for drunkenness, and for road accidents, divorces, child abuse or homicides caused by drinking. Just as prison alcoholism rehab programmes are set up for the purpose of reducing relapse rates, hospitals take care of the physiological illnesses associated with alcoholism, and industrial alcoholism programs have as goals reduction of absenteeism, improved work output, rehabilitation of troubled workers, and not least, savings of company money. The primary purpose of AA, of course, is quite different, but this does not mean that programmes set up for other purposes are no good. It means that we stick to our business, and are grateful that other agencies make their particular contributions to the welfare of society and problem drinkers. When their programmes enable AA members to carry the AA message, that is an additional cause for gratitude. It is occasionally a good idea to make clear to non-AA agencies that we can only share our experience, strength and hope in order to solve our common problem and to help others. "Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

As AA members, we are not qualified to judge, endorse or oppose any other programme 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.

## WHICH AA MEMBERS ARE BEST QUALIFIED FOR CO-OPERATION WITH SUCH PROGRAMMES?

Any AA member who wishes can become a valuable asset to these programmes if he/she is willing and able to learn and work in non-AA ways. It seems that those who have enjoyed this activity most, and who have been most successful at it, are AA members who:

- have several years' continuous sobriety
- have had wide AA experience, not only in more than one Group, but also in CSO and General Service Office affairs
- have extensive knowledge and understanding of all the AA experience recorded in the Big Book "Alcoholics Anonymous", "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age", "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" and other AA publications
- have time, patience and willingness to understand the purpose and methods of non-AA approaches to drinking problems and
- have sufficient serenity, steadfastness and courage, mixed with a clear grasp of the meaning of *Twelfth Step* work.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP START SUCH A PROGRAMME IF NONE EXISTS IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

You've already made a good start by familiarising yourself with this material. Follow that up by studying all the other AA publications suggested at the end of this Guideline. Find out whether any other AAs in your community are interested in and/or knowledgeable about such programmes. Discover whether your local CSO or Area Committee knows where such help is needed. Talk it over with other AAs (be patient - not all members are interested in this, of course, and their feelings are to be respected, as yours are, but don't be put off when you talk to such people). Then two or three of you might call formally on a local judge or other official you believe might be interested in your help. Offer to help in any way that the non-AA agency desires, but be sure to make it clear why and how we in AA try to help other alcoholics, and what AA's Traditions are. Explain carefully that you are acting only as individuals, as private citizens, not as representatives of any AA Group nor of AA as a whole. Leave some AA material, such as the pamphlet "*If You Are a Professional*". Try to make sure every official you talk with is taken to some open AA meetings and meets some AAs sober a long time, but always bear in mind that quality of sobriety is more important than mere length of sobriety. Try to educate yourself about such programmes by contacting any other community agency interested in drinking problems and learning how they do it. Write to the appropriate governmental agencies for information about their programmes. Relax. If this is the right time, the programme will happen. If it doesn't, wait for a more appropriate opportunity.



## RECOMMENDED READING

### PAMPHLETS:

- *“How AA Members Co-operate”*
- *“AA Tradition - How It Developed”*
- *“The Twelve Traditions Illustrated”*
- *“AA In Prisons”*
- *“If You Are A Professional”*
- *“A Brief Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous”*
- *“It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell”*
- *“How Did I End Up Here?”*
- *“AA and Occupational Alcoholism Programs”*

### GUIDELINES:

- GL-04: *“Information on Alcoholics Anonymous”*
- GL-17: *“For AA Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field”*
- GL-07: *“Public Information and Co-operation with the Professional Community”*
- GL-08: *“Court and Similar Programs”*

*also related:*

- GL-16: *“Correctional & Treatment Facilities Committees”*
- GL-19: *“Forming Local Committees on Co-operation with the Professional Community”*
- GL-22: *“Suggestions for Members Wishing to Visit Correction Centres.”*



## GUIDELINE NO GL-09

## AA ANSWERING SERVICES

The General Service Office receives many questions about AA answering services. Since our information on this subject was incomplete and largely outdated, we mailed a questionnaire to AA answering services and Central Offices (Intergroups) in the US and Canada. The response to this questionnaire was extremely good; a great deal of valuable information was shared with us; and these Guidelines are designed to share it with you.

Naturally, an answering service that takes care of 14 groups will have a very different experience from that of a central office (intergroup) serving up to 900 groups and using an answering service for after-hours calls only.

Helpful information was sent by many Central Offices (Intergroups); but, because these Guidelines are intended for those who are just getting started and are not yet ready for a central office (intergroup), we will share only the information pertaining to AA answering services.

All of the following material is drawn directly from the responses to the questionnaire. The suggestions offered are based on the actual, practical experience of AAs in many localities.

## GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS SERVED

Most answering services take care of groups in one community only, or in one county.

1 In a large West Coast state, an answering service solved a problem for several cities that were in the same county but had separate telephone directories. Long-distance telephone calls were necessary to reach the central office that served them. At the suggestion of the central office, three of these cities got together and hired a 24-hour answering service, with each city paying one-third of the monthly bill.

2 To handle a similar situation, another West Coast central office availed itself of a service offered by the telephone company, which provided a special local phone number with a direct connection to the central office at no extra charge to the caller.

Perhaps other central offices are using such a method for providing an answering service to the more remote member groups.

## STARTING AN ANSWERING SERVICE

Sometimes, an answering service has been started by one group or even by one or two members who felt the need for such a service. As the service began to fill the need and as AA grew locally, other groups nearby became interested and joined in the support of the answering service. However, an overwhelming majority of the people who responded to our questionnaire agreed on this point: As a basis for such a decision, the group conscience of all groups involved should be consulted *in advance*, in order to ensure both financial support and a supply of volunteers to take *Twelfth Step* calls.

Here is a sampling of some of the experiences that were shared with us:

- 1 *"We asked for a show of hands at just one meeting, and seven people indicated they had come to AA through the answering service. Is it worth it? We should say it is!"*
- 2 *"We are pleased with our answering service. We have 'Twelfth-Stepped' the operators, and they are gracious and sympathetic. We feel fortunate and grateful."*
- 3 *"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."*

## HOW ARE ANSWERING SERVICES FUNDED?

When several groups get together and decide to employ 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.

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ANSWERING SERVICE?

Our questionnaire asked whether the answering service was responsible to a committee on which each group had a representative, or who was responsible if there were no committee. We received a variety of answers:

- 1 *One member is responsible.*
- 2 *Two members are responsible.*
- 3 *Answering service chairperson and volunteers are responsible.*
- 4 *Answering service committee is responsible.*
- 5 *Answering service chairperson is responsible.*

Even when responsibility for the service is assumed by two or more members or a committee (regardless of what it may be called), it was suggested that *one person*, appointed by the committee or group involved, should make the arrangements, have all the later contacts with the answering service, and pay the bills – in order to avoid confusing the answering service personnel.

## WHO ANSWERS THE PHONE – AA MEMBERS OR COMMERCIAL ANSWERING SERVICE PERSONNEL?

The majority of our respondents seemed to use a commercial service, though some rely on AA members exclusively. 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 AA member, who then calls the alcoholic seeking help.*
- 2 *The Twelfth Step list is arranged according to geographical areas. When the address of the prospect has been ascertained, an AA member in the vicinity is called. Several suggested that there should be separate lists of men and women Twelfth-steppers.*
- 3 *Several AA 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 Step workers.*

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 AA 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 AA volunteers.*

### **When an alcoholic calls for help ...**

One answering service shared the following information, which might be helpful to those who plan to use a commercial answering service and want to explain their needs to its personnel.

- 1 *Answer by saying, "AA answering service." (This way, the caller will not launch into his or her story).*
- 2 *Try to find out what the caller wants, but don't try to 'qualify' him or her.*
- 3 *If a person is reluctant to give a name or other information, try to cross-connect (patch) with an AA member.*
- 4 *If the person is reluctant to give a name, don't insist.*
- 5 *Don't argue with callers; explain that you are only an answering service and will try to put them in touch with an AA member.*
- 6 *Many AA members are at meetings between the hours of 7.30 and 10.30pm. Inform callers of this situation, 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 *This service is set up so that any criticism can be answered by telling 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 of meeting changes, special events, and any other items that AA members might enquire about.*
- 11 *The answering service operators record each call on a slip of paper with the name of the caller (if possible), time, phone number, and reason for call. On the back of the slip, the operators note the disposition of the call with the name and phone number of the AA member to whom it was referred.*

## PROBLEMS IN FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION

Very few reported problems about raising money to pay for the answering service. Usually, Groups were aware that the service was filling a real need and consequently were willing to support it. Respondents did emphasise the importance of being assured in advance of support and of being willing to stick with the answering service until it has had a chance to catch on and prove its worth.

The only administrative problem that was mentioned with any frequency was the importance of keeping the list of volunteer twelfth-steppers up to date and on a rotating basis. In a few instances, the AA members felt that the commercial service was too impersonal and cold. Others suggested that communication between the AA members and the answering service improved when AAs began talking to the people who were actually handling the calls.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR THOSE CONSIDERING AN ANSWERING SERVICE

### Getting Started

- 1 Be sure that all groups in the area – rather than just a few members – really want to establish such 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 in the area involved. Take care to separate individual opinions from group conscience.
- 4 In the beginning, be prepared for slow acceptance by some members and for scarcity of volunteers. These are simply growing pains. Criticism – both constructive and the other kind – will be forthcoming. Even though you hear “It can’t be done”, it really can – and it can be a most rewarding experience as well.

### Volunteer Support of AA Members

- 1 Consider the number of AA people available to answer *Twelfth Step* calls.
- 2 Consider the need for a responsible person to take charge.
- 3 Be sure that the list of AA volunteers is current and active.
- 4 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.
- 5 If you cannot use or do not choose to use a commercial service, start out with two AA members – a man and a woman with reasonable length and quality of sobriety – to handle the calls. If possible, arrange a small salary to ensure dependability.
- 6 In one area that uses volunteers only, rather than a commercial answering service, an answering machine was rented from the telephone company. The machine gives an announcement message, carries two phone numbers, and also records incoming calls. It can be operated by remote control, so that volunteers can take and act upon messages with greater convenience.
- 7 Carefully estimate how much money will be needed and how much will be available.
- 8 Be sure that the groups will finance the venture.
- 9 Encourage groups to pledge a regular amount each month.

- 10 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.

### **Commercial Services**

- 1 Investigate the commercial service thoroughly before reaching an agreement with it.
- 2 Understand what your needs really are, and find out whether the service can provide them. Explain carefully to the service what AA is and what kinds of calls to expect; emphasise that its employees do not have to become authorities on alcoholism, but merely refer calls to AA members.
- 3 Have a written contract, and issue written guidelines for the answering service. (See "*When an alcoholic calls for help*" above.)
- 4 Request a report from the service each month about the number of calls received and the action taken on them.
- 5 Check on the turnover in service personnel, and be sure to maintain *current* lists of material for the personnel. Periodically ask them questions and try to become aware of the kind of information they are giving to callers.
- 6 Have one member in charge of the answering service – that is, to collect the money, pay the bills, get the volunteers, and deal with the commercial service personnel. This member should be responsible to a committee or whatever group is serving in that capacity.
- 7 Have the chairperson of the answering service committee or another experienced AA member work with the operators in the initial stage of using a commercial service, so that questions can be answered on the spot. This will help the operators to establish an appropriate approach to the alcoholic calling and to recognise the extreme importance of this initial contact.
- 8 Have representatives of the answering service committee go to the groups, explain how the service will work, and ask for volunteers for the *Twelfth Step* list.
- 9 Investigate the possibility of a patch system whereby the answering service can patch a call through its switchboard to the telephone of an AA member.
- 10 Have patience, tolerance and faith.

One area reported using the same answering service for 20 years, with reliable AA members keeping the *Twelfth Step List* up to date. They still feel this system is working very well.





## ARMED SERVICES

### FOR GROUPS IN THE ARMED SERVICES - BASED ON MATERIAL RECEIVED FROM ACTIVE GROUPS

#### Some of the steps that active groups have followed:

- 1 Contact commanding officers, medical officers, and chaplains and let them know of AA and that it can be made available on the base, or that there are nearby off-base Groups;
- 2 Show them a list of other AA Groups in the armed services (available from General Service Office);
- 3 Provide them with AA literature, eg *"A Brief Guide to AA"*, *"AA and the Armed Services"*, *"AA as a Resource for the Health Care Worker"*, *"If you are a Professional"*;
- 4 If there is a nearby AA Group off-base, make use of this Group and ask interested alcoholics to attend the off-base Group. When this is possible, it has proved the most satisfactory answer to service-based personnel, as it enables the man or woman to attend a Group similar to the majority of AA groups, where they can mingle with alcoholics of every type and not feel that they are special. To quote directly from a Group that holds meetings off-base: *"The present arrangement provides civilian accommodation close to the base (but out of military jurisdiction) where civilians and service people get the joint benefits of variety in thinking, continuity of AA program, a place away from the service atmosphere to relax, and the opportunity to meet people who provide a social outlet locally. Since most service canteens, clubs and messes are 'wet', this is a distinct advantage in getting away from the alcoholic atmosphere."*
- 5 Rank can be a problem; it has been partially solved in some Groups by the use of first names only, by attending meetings in civilian clothes, and by the expressed desire of the Group members to mingle on an informal basis. A quote from an armed services Group on this question: *"The absence of consideration of rank in AA is firmly stressed on the initial call. Over the entrance to our meeting place is a sign which reads, 'Abandon rank, all ye who enter here'"* This has been successfully observed without detrimental effect to military discipline, and our membership includes commissioned officers, NCOs, other ranks and civilians. From another Group on the same subject: *"In our meetings, rank, just as is profession, social or financial standing, religion, politics, etc, is forgotten. First names are the rule, and whether you are a sergeant or a colonel (and we've had both) or anywhere in between, makes no difference. Our common problem, alcohol, and our common purpose, to attain sobriety and help others do the same, are stressed and take care very well of our differences, including rank."* Another solution: two groups, one for officers and one for enlisted personnel.
- 6 Place a notice on bulletin boards, in the base news-letter or paper, advising personnel of the availability of AA and the time and place of meetings.
- 7 Most groups get their referrals from the medical officer or chaplain, so again it is stressed that there are no ranks in AA. It's a good idea to see that such officers are thoroughly familiar with AA and understand its aims and purposes. If the Group is on base, co-operation is most important, since those in command must provide a meeting place and approve attendance at meetings.

- 8 There are differences of opinion about Groups on the base. A chaplain had this to say: *"Why have a Group on the military installation itself when an existing organisation can usually be found in the neighbouring community and a member is as close as the telephone? Because the service persons too often hesitate to join civilian Groups lest their presence and their problem be a reflection upon their branch of the military service. To be with their own kind in an endeavour to overcome a problem seems to make it an easier decision to reach."* The conclusion stated, that off-base Groups are preferable, is the result of a questionnaire that was sent to existing armed services Groups and reflects the majority opinion of those Groups. But the decision on whether or not to form a Group on the base itself must be made in relation to local needs and problems. Both on-base and off-base Groups have been successful.

## GUIDELINE NO GL-11

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AA AND AL-ANON

The Fellowships of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Al-Anon Family Groups have a unique relationship. They are naturally drawn together by their close family ties, yet the *Twelve Traditions*, the General Service Boards, and the General Service Conferences of both Fellowships suggest that they function more effectively if they remain separate, each co-operating but not affiliating with the other.

Each Fellowship has always had its own General Service Board, General Service Office, Conference, publishing company and directory, and each has established its own policies and maintained its own services. This separation of function has served both AA and Al-Anon well; as a matter of fact, AA's policy of *co-operation but not affiliation* was established as long ago as the early 1950's and both Al-Anon and AA recognised then the importance of maintaining separate Fellowships.

Nevertheless, from time to time questions come to both AA and Al-Anon General Service Offices indicating confusion as to how AA and Al-Anon may best co-operate in the area of Groups, Central Offices, Area and Regional Conventions and get-togethers. The staff members of the General Service Offices of AA and Al-Anon met and discussed these questions and AA's General Service Conference approved the following Guidelines:

**Question:** Should a Group be affiliated with both AA and Al-Anon?

**Answer:** *As the primary purpose of the AA Group is different from that of the Al-Anon Family Group, it is suggested they not be combined but remain separate groups. This will enable both Fellowships to function within their Twelve Traditions and to carry their separate (different) messages more effectively. Thus, the group name, the officers and the meeting should be either AA or Al-Anon, but not both. Naturally, all are welcome to attend the open meetings of both AA and Al-Anon Groups.*

**Question:** Should the word 'family' be used in the name of an AA Group?

**Answer:** *AA Group policy was reaffirmed, i.e. that "only those with a desire to stop drinking may be members of AA Groups and only AA members are eligible to be officers of AA Groups". It was therefore suggested that the word 'family' (long identified with Al-Anon) should not be used in the name of an AA Group.*

**Question:** Should AA and Al-Anon have combined central services and offices?

**Answer:** *Experience and the Twelve Traditions of both AA and Al-Anon have shown that each Fellowship will function more effectively if it is separate from the other. This includes 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. Naturally, the members of any service committee or office should be members of the Fellowship to which that committee or office is responsible.*

**Question:**     **How may AA and Al-Anon co-operate in Area and Regional Conventions and get-togethers?**

**Answer:**       *In accordance with the Twelve Traditions, a Convention is either AA or Al-Anon, not both. However, most AA Convention committees invite Al-Anon to participate by planning its own programme; the Host Committee may also arrange facilities for the Al-Anon meetings.*

**Question:**     **When Al-Anon participates in an AA Convention, what is the financial relationship between the two Fellowships?**

**Answer:**       *The relationship and the financial arrangements usually follow one of two patterns: if the AA convention committee invites Al-Anon to participate with its own programme, the committee pays all expenses (for meeting rooms, coffee, etc) and keeps all income from registrations. Alternatively, attendance records of AA members and Al-Anon members may be kept separately, Al-Anon paying its own direct expenses plus a proportional share of common expenses of the convention. Al-Anon in this case receives its own share of the registration income and, of course, shares in any losses that may be incurred. This procedure is followed at International Conventions of AA and elsewhere.*

**Question:**     **Should an AA 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 co-operation but not affiliation, it is suggested that AA should not make gifts or contributions to Al-Anon. By the same token, AA should not accept contributions from Al-Anon. If separate registrations have been kept for both AA and Al-Anon members, income may be easily assigned.*

**Question:**     **Should 'family groups' be listed in AA directories?**

**Answer:**       *Because many such Groups had asked to be listed, this question was put on the agenda for the 1972 AA General Service Conference. The conclusion was in accord with the consensus already reached by AA and Al-Anon, as noted earlier in these Guidelines, and was recorded as follows in the 1972 Final Conference Report:*

*"After discussion the Conference reaffirmed AA Group policy that only those with a desire to stop drinking may be members of AA Groups; that only AA members are eligible to be officers of AA Groups; that non-alcoholics are welcome at open meetings of AA. It is suggested that the word 'family' not be used in the name of an AA Group. If AA members and their non-alcoholic family and friends wish to meet together on a regular basis, it is suggested they consider these gatherings to be 'meetings', not AA Groups.*

*"Listing in AA directories: it was the sense of the meeting that the family groups should not be listed under the family group name in the directories.*

*"We think you will be interested in the resolution of gratitude to the Fellowship of the Al-Anon Family Groups which was unanimously approved by the 1969 General Service Conference of AA (North America):*

*"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 AA's debt of gratitude to the Al-Anon Family Groups, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that Alcoholics Anonymous recognises 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 recognise, and hereby does recognise, the great contribution which the Al-Anon Family Groups have made and are making in assisting the families of alcoholics everywhere."



## CENTRAL SERVICE OFFICES

### WHAT IS A CENTRAL SERVICE OFFICE?

A Central Service Office (CSO) is an AA service office that involves partnership among Groups in a community, just as AA Groups themselves are partnerships of individuals. It is established to carry out certain functions common to all the Groups, functions which are best handled by a centralised office, and it is usually maintained, supervised and supported by these Groups in their own general interest. It exists to aid the Groups in their common primary purpose of carrying the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

### THE FUNCTIONS OF A CSO

AA's experience has clearly demonstrated that central offices are essential, particularly in populous areas, and there are close to 500 of them functioning around the world, performing vital AA services. Needless to say, these constitute a network of service outlets and AA contacts for which we should be very grateful. Sometimes, however, CSO ventures have bogged down in disputes over money, authority and like matters and have thus become less effective in carrying the AA message. It is not always clear why these troubles have arisen, but often it has been because the proper functions of a CSO were not clearly explained or understood, or because there was some disregard of the principles inherent in AA's *Twelve Traditions*. So the following suggestions have been made to outline the basic services a CSO might offer:

1. **AA Enquiries:** By providing an Alcoholics Anonymous listing in the local telephone directory, a CSO can accept enquiries from those seeking help. They can refer the caller to the appropriate AA Group, where sponsorship is arranged, or have a *Twelfth Stepper* contact them.
2. **Office Facilities:** A CSO can maintain a conveniently located office in which paid workers and/or volunteers are available to carry the message of AA to the alcoholic.
3. **Information Exchange:** The CSO can function as a clearing house for the circulation and exchange of information among all the AA Groups in the community.
4. **Local Committees on PI & CPC:** The CSO is an ideal contact with those in the community seeking information about AA. Thus, AA's relations with the public and professionals in the field of alcoholism are often best handled through the CSO. This activity includes various jobs:
  - a) Making arrangements for AA speakers at the request of non-alcoholic groups.

Maintaining a PO Box so that AA inquiries may be handled discreetly, particularly to protect the anonymity of members.

Assisting the press and other public media in the development of newspaper articles and general publicity about AA, keeping in mind the principle of attraction rather than promotion. For example, TV and radio announcements, programmes on alcohol abuse; suggestions for newspaper and magazine articles; the latest facts about AA and other useful material.

Co-operation with other community agencies which deal with alcoholism and the alcoholic. Such assistance should, of course, be supplied generously but always in keeping with the *Twelve Traditions* and in such a manner as to keep AA free of affiliations. (Special Conference-approved pamphlets, “*How AA Members Co-operate*”, “*If You Are a Professional...*” and “*AA in Your Community*”, can be obtained from General Service Office. Also available, “*Co-operation With the Professional Community Workbook*”, a loose-leaf binder containing sample letters, background information, pamphlets and other material).

In Areas where Public Information and Co-operation with the Professional Community Committees are under the auspices of a General Service Committee, the CSO works in close co-operation with these committees.

5. **Hospitalisation:** Where a plan has been developed for admitting AA-sponsored patients to local hospitals, the CSO can serve by making the arrangements.
6. **AA in Institutions:** The CSO can maintain contact with Groups in Correctional Facilities and Treatment Centres (CF&TCs), offering literature and sponsorship and arranging for AA speakers and visitors to the meetings in those institutions. When there is a CF&TC Committee for this purpose, the CSO may assist it by passing along to the committee the duties that come under the auspices of AA in institutions. (A practical way of keeping up this close working relationship is to have at least one member of the CSO Committee on the CF&TC Committee.) CSOs handling institutional contacts are also urged to send for General Service Office material: Guideline GL-16: “*Correctional and Treatment Facilities Committees*” and the pamphlets “*AA in Treatment Centres*” and “*Bridging the Gap*”.
7. **AA Publications:** A CSO is well-situated to prepare and publish periodicals such as meeting lists and contacts, and a Regional bulletin or magazine.
8. **Local AA Events:** An AA CSO is a logical body to manage the details of an annual AA dinner, picnic or convention, if the participating Groups wish it.

## MAKING A GOOD BEGINNING

Like many well-meant ventures in AA, CSOs sometimes suffer because they are impulsively conceived and hastily established. The unhappy and damaging experiences of such ventures indicate that a few questions should be raised before a CSO is opened. The first and most important should concern actual need - is there a sufficient number of Groups in the community to justify a CSO? Are they able and willing to support it financially? Have they been consulted as to whether such an office could serve their needs? And will they co-operate with it and support its aims and purposes? If, after such consideration, an office seems impractical or unnecessary, it is possible that a telephone answering service may be better suited to the needs. See Guideline GL-09: “*AA Answering Services*”. Questions should also be raised about the proposed location of the CSO and the personnel and equipment it would need.

It is sometimes tempting at this stage - perhaps in the interest of making the best use of scarce funds - to consider moderately priced or free facilities supplied by other agencies or organisations, but it's better to forego this short-term advantage if there's any likelihood that AA would lose its independent status in the bargain, or appear - in the public mind at least - to be sponsored or controlled by that other organisation. The question also arises whether to buy or rent the premises. Traditionally, AA 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 AA members of the future to financial obligations for which they have not initially assumed responsibility. So renting a facility has proved best.



It may also appear attractive at this point to consolidate the CSO with the facilities and operations of a club, but the risks and pitfalls involved in this are almost too numerous to mention here. Certainly, an obvious reason for discouraging this is the possibility that the problems of operating the club and the CSO 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 regular AA Group activities; any strong identification with a club may impair a CSO's ability to serve the Groups.

A central location for the office is usually desirable, if finances permit. It is also well to consider possible future needs when evaluating the initial requirements: sometimes accommodation may be rented in a building where adjoining rooms may become available later on. Sufficient room should be provided for photocopying and collation, mailing work, committee meetings, *Twelfth Step* phone calls and consultation with newcomers. Since a CSO is intended to provide services for all 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 is, however, really up to each office, acting autonomously.

## GETTING UNDER WAY

Once some of these preliminary matters have been satisfactorily dealt with, the road is clear for the formal organisational work. Here's a suggested plan that has worked well in many instances:

Each Group in the community is asked to send both a GSR and an Alternate to a special meeting to form a CSO Committee (called a *Steering Committee* in some places). In large communities it may be preferable, even necessary, to utilise the Area/District structure and have the DCMs form the CSO Committee. Once formed, the Committee assumes responsibility for the project and outlines its aims and purposes for approval by the participating Groups. Such an outline might cover these points:

Listing all Groups in the community that want to participate;

1. A reminder that financial support is voluntary and not a condition of membership (in keeping with AA tradition at other levels
2. A clear explanation of the fact that responsibility for the maintenance of the CSO rests with the Groups. So each Group should name a CSO representative and alternate to serve a specified term as the connecting link between the Group and its CSO;
3. A summary of the functions of the CSO and an explanation of how it will be staffed and operated;
4. A discussion of how the service office will handle - on the Groups' behalf - such vital matters as inquiries from newcomers, relations with the press and similar duties;
5. Assurance that the CSO will be operated in keeping with AA's *Twelve Traditions*.

## GROUP REPRESENTATION AT A CENTRAL OFFICE

CSOs usually have no authority on their own account: they derive it from the participating Groups. The Groups, of course, maintain effective control over the CSO operation through their representatives and financial support. Just as our Delegates serve at our annual AA Conference on behalf of the Groups, so do these local representatives reflect the Groups' will and conscience in the operations of the CSO. In some communities, a CSO Committee or Steering Committee is set up to handle the administrative activities of the CSO. This committee meets monthly and deals with general policy and plans. At quarterly meetings, it reports to the Groups or the Group representatives on CSO activities. It is extremely important to keep a two-way flow of information going between CSO and Groups.

## STAFFING THE OFFICE

As well as the AA volunteers, who respond to *Twelfth Step* calls at the office, most CSOs now employ at least one paid full-time secretary; large offices may also have paid clerical workers on the staff to assist the secretary. Although the principles involving certain paid employees of CSOs are now widely known in AA, it is still helpful to review the appropriate AA Tradition at the time of opening a new CSO. As it states in *Tradition Eight: "Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centres may employ special workers"*. We may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage non-alcoholics, and such services may well be recompensed. It should be clear from this that the professional secretary functions as a paid employee of the CSO, not as an AA member, during duty hours and is hired on the basis of professional skills. Regarding compensation for paid workers, Bill W writes in "*Twelve Concepts for World Service*" that "*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*". Social Security and certain insurance benefits should be provided, together with sick leave, holidays and pensions.

Rotation among paid staff workers is also discussed in "*Twelve Concepts*", which suggests that when there is more than one paid worker, rotation of service assignments offers security and continuity in an office. It is practical for each worker to possess the general ability to do, or to learn how to do, any job in the office. The basis of compensating paid workers then becomes time served rather than special abilities.

It is suggested that the CSO professional secretary also be accorded a vote as well as a voice on the Steering Committee. This policy is successfully followed by AA World Services Inc. The co-ordinating staff member - a paid employee as well as an AA member - also serves as a director and thus has a vote on policy matters.

## SUPERVISION - MAKING THE OFFICE SERVE

It is plain that the success of the CSO 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 take the trouble to explain it in the By-laws or some other set of Guidelines. For while it is difficult to establish hard-and-fast rules and then live by them: it is at least reasonable to clarify matters such as the function of the office and the extent of the paid secretary's authority and duties. Sometimes major decisions can be entrusted to the paid secretary, while in other cases it may be wiser for the Steering Committee to retain control. In any case, it is important that problems get an early review by somebody who is authorised to deal with them, otherwise the CSO 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 that all the Groups in the community should be encouraged to share. Nevertheless, it is also important that calls be distributed according to the location of the Group, that is, newcomers should usually be put in touch with the Group nearest to them unless they ask otherwise.
2. Meetings of the Steering Committee should be held often enough to dispose of problems of immediate interest and concern. Monthly is a widely-accepted periodicity;
3. After business hours, a telephone answering service - carefully chosen - should handle incoming calls (see Guideline GL-09: "*AA Answering Services*");

4. Authority and responsibility should be related. It is unfair, for example, to assign certain responsibilities to anyone, professional or volunteer, without 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 AA Group:

- Office facilities have to be leased;
- A secretary must be hired and paid;
- Office supplies must be purchased; and
- The telephone bill has to be paid regularly.

To take care of these responsibilities adequately, it has been found wise to opt for separate incorporation of special facilities such as service offices, which require money and/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 emphasised:

1. The name "*Alcoholics Anonymous*" should not appear in the corporate title - this name ought to be the sole property of AA as a whole;
2. Limit the activities of the corporation to the one locality only;
3. Expenses create a need for financial responsibility that should be recognised at the outset - if properly understood and dealt with, it never need become a source of trouble.

### SUGGESTED METHODS OF FINANCING A CENTRAL OFFICE

1. **The Pledge System:** Each Group agrees to contribute a fixed amount, paid periodically, for the support of the office. This assures the CSO of a regular income and helps it to plan the best means of meeting its own obligations. But occasionally there are Groups that refuse to support a central office. In these cases, the spirit of contributing voluntarily that prevails throughout AA should also characterise the raising of funds for the office. If Groups can't or won't pay their share of the costs, they shouldn't be denied the services of the office.
2. **Sale of Literature:** Many CSOs publish their own meeting lists, others produce introductory pamphlets explaining AA; these can be sold at a profit to help defray office expenses. It is also possible to buy books from General Service Office at the Group price for resale at the retail price, the profit going to support the office; there are also discounts on pamphlets ordered in quantities of 100 or more.
3. **Group Collections:** AA Groups participating in the financial support of the CSO may choose to make their contributions by setting aside fixed sums from their regular collections.
4. **Special Collections:** Some Groups provide a special collection box or basket in a convenient place during meeting times, inviting members to contribute. In that same vein, AA members can make individual contributions on a pledge or voluntary basis directly to the CSO, keeping in mind, however, that such contributions should not exceed \$6,050 (the 2008 Conference Approved figure) in any one year.

5. **Drives and Events:** Some Central Service Offices conduct periodic drives for funds. Others hold yearly banquets, conventions and similar events, using the 'profits' for support of the office.
6. **Prudent Reserve:** For help in financial planning, the 1977 General Service Conference recommended that "a suggested prudent reserve ... preferably be one to 12 months' operating expenses, depending on local needs".

## CENTRAL OFFICES AND GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE

Common experience has shown that AA's world-wide unity is best served if AA Groups maintain their own separate contacts with General Service Office, rather than have the CSOs maintain these contacts on their behalf. Direct Group contact with General Service Office doesn't take the place of services provided by a local CSO, but it does help General Service Office to keep in closer touch with the Groups. CSOs and Area Committees are complementary rather than competitive AA operations. Both exist to help ensure AA unity and to fulfil AA's primary purpose of carrying the message, but they do it through separate structures.

There are, however, some important areas of interest in which close contact between the CSOs and General Service Office is not only desirable but necessary. It is helpful for General Service Office to receive regular listings of Group mailing addresses as compiled by a CSO. If such listings are not prepared, CSOs can still improve AA services by keeping General Service Office up-to-date on Group changes. General Service Office seeks such information from each Group, but this is not always forthcoming. It is the job of the Group Secretary to register the Group with General Service Office for the Public Liability Insurance Scheme (see "Australian AA Service Manual" under Section 2: "The AA Group").

Thus, up-to-date information from the CSO helps General Service Office to maintain unbroken contact with the Groups. It is important to note here that Groups should not assume that if they list themselves with a CSO they are automatically listed at General Service Office. For this reason, new Groups are encouraged to send a Group Registration Form directly to:

**General Service Office of AA, 48 Firth Street, Arncliffe, NSW 2205**

For its own part, General Service Office also seeks to keep all CSOs well informed. As a regular policy, for example, two copies of the General Service Office bulletin "*AA Around Australia*" are sent to each CSO, unless more are requested. General Service Office also keeps a record of all CSOs and is interested in assisting these offices wherever possible.

## NEWSLETTERS OR BULLETINS

Newsletters or bulletins published by CSOs 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 officers. Frequently material from AA literature is reprinted and discussed and articles on subjects of interest to members also are published. Experience indicates that, as in most AA service activities, it is prudent to make a committee (rather than one or two individuals) responsible for the formal planning and content of the bulletin. These people may be appointed by the CSO Committee or by the CSO representatives. Many local publications quote from AA literature such as the 'Big Book', the "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions", the "Australian AA Service Manual" and Conference Approved pamphlets. Any AA newsletter, bulletin or meeting list is more than welcome to use this material, of course, but please include the appropriate acknowledgement (as below), in order to ensure that the copyrights of AA literature are protected:

- 1 The copyright to the AA Preamble is held by AA Grapevine Inc, not by AA World Services. The correct acknowledgement is: *"Reprinted with permission of the AA Grapevine, Inc"*.
- 2 *"Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions"* should be followed by these words: *"Reprinted with permission of AA World Services, Inc"*.
- 3 After a quotation from an AA book or pamphlet: *"Reprinted from (name of book or pamphlet, page number) with permission of AA World Services, Inc"*.
- 4 See also GL-02: *"AA Conference-Approved Literature"* and see the *"Australian AA Service Manual"* Section 11: *"AA Literature"*, especially *'AA's Intellectual Property – Trademarks'*. The General Service Board has asked that when AA logos are used by the Fellowship for its flyers, media releases and events notices, that Members respect and take pride in the symbols and not be tempted to embellish or combine logos with other artwork – and when presenting these symbols, to see that the circles are nice and round, not carelessly distorted into ovals.

The insertion in the proper place of the lines emphasised above will help all of us do our part in trying to protect our own literature from misuse. A list of Newsletters in the Fellowship is available from General Service Office upon request. Here are some more suggestions based on local experience with AA newsletters and bulletins. Perhaps you might consider:

- Printing your newsletter on standard A4 paper (29.7 x 21.0 cm);
- Scheduling a 'theme issue' at regular intervals, centring on some aspect of the AA programme and using excerpts from Conference-approved material (with proper credit) relating to the theme;
- Asking for and publishing letters from your AA readers;
- Carrying minutes of various committee meetings - CSO Steering Committee, institutions, public information, etc;
- Carrying committee financial reports and records of Group contributions;
- Running occasional appropriate cartoons. (If these are from the *AA 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 up paid readership.

## COMMUNICATION

Communication is the key to working together - CSO and the Area Committee and the District Committee and the General Service Office. There is plenty of work for all of us, especially for the CSO Committees concerned with public information, with the professional community and with prisons and hospitals. 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 to avoid duplication of effort. It is not important who does the work, but that the work gets done; that help is there for the next alcoholic who needs us and our Fellowship.

## **GOOD LUCK and SMOOTH SAILING**

We hope the above suggestions will help make your Central Service Office venture a vital and fruitful addition to the AA activity in your area. As we've pointed out, these are suggestions only - it is the spirit and co-operation behind the central office idea that will make it work.

## GUIDELINE NO GL-13

# CLUBS

This Guideline originated with AA World Services, New York. Reprinted with permission.

## GROWTH OF CLUBS

From AA's beginning, the Group has been the mainspring in carrying out the primary purpose of AA:

"... to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

It is in the Group that we recover, learn to live together in unity and grow spiritually through service. Nevertheless, many members have felt the need for a permanent meeting place - a home, so to speak - and during the past 40 years the club idea has become a part of AA experience. It has become apparent that some members would like to extend fellowship beyond the Group; typically, new members often wish to talk with more experienced members on a one-to-one basis, away from the more formal environment of a meeting. As well, many members have wanted a place to go for coffee and conversation, where they could rest for an hour, a place where they could gather socially. Thus, the idea of the club was born.

In 1947, Bill W wrote a *Grapevine* article on clubs that became part of our pamphlet "*AA Tradition - How it Developed*". The title carried the question "*Clubs in AA - Are They With Us to Stay?*" Today, the answer to that question is undoubtedly "Yes" - members who wanted clubs were prepared to do whatever was required and they brought the idea into reality. From there, the willingness of club-minded members to make them work, to enable them to function effectively and serve a useful purpose for those who find such an environment helpful and satisfying, was the basis on which clubs have been founded and from which they have flourished.

So, how can those interested in starting a club today establish one that will be both a pleasant place to gather and asset to AA in the community?

## OUT OF EXPERIENCE

Here are some suggestions that come from the experience of established clubs:

1. There is no such entity as an 'AA Club', nor can there be; that is, the AA logo and the name "Alcoholics Anonymous" cannot be used in the context of clubs. Nevertheless, it is regarded as essential that club rules and conduct be kept in line with the principles implicit in our *Twelve Traditions*.
2. So, while the club may be known by a name that does not involve AA, in keeping with *Tradition Seven*, the club should not accept funds from outside the AA membership. Naturally, this includes any kind of fund-raising that might involve the public. Members' dues and contributions should keep the club going, plus rent money received from any AA Groups that may hold their meetings in the club. Everyone in the club should be aware of the value of *Tradition Seven*, the self-support tradition - it is not always easy to assume all your financial responsibilities, but it is always more satisfying.

3. It is necessary to define the purpose of the club and look for space that will meet the needs. Determine the amount of money needed for such an operation and work out a budget that will cover getting started, rent, utilities and utensils, custodial care and similar expenses.
4. Call a meeting of all interested Groups and members separate from any AA Group meeting. Inform them of your plans and the financial needs and determine what real support you can count on from the beginning. As well, ask local Groups if they would be interested in renting space from the club for AA meetings and if so, what rent they would consider reasonable. Sometimes, charter members of the club are willing to pay a little more in the beginning to help get the club off the ground. It is better that all participate in the financing than for one or two wealthier members to assume the responsibility. Let everyone participate who wants to - it is more fun that way. Monthly dues will vary depending on type and need of club and the number of members who support it.

## MEMBERSHIP & DIRECTORS

An inaugural meeting might discuss qualifications for club membership. Most clubs state that any member of AA is eligible for membership. Some require 30 days of sobriety, while some specify 90 days, although new AAs may use the club facilities as guests until they qualify for club membership. It is also wise to consider the case of the AA member who has a relapse - under what conditions is he/she to be readmitted to club membership? All dues-paying members would normally be eligible to hold office and to vote at the club business meetings.

An inaugural meeting might also consider the appointment of directors, how many, their duties, their qualifications and personal qualities. The directors' responsibilities will include all the club's affairs but the business and financial aspects are the most important. Clubs sometimes require some three years' sobriety for directors, but it must be borne in mind that length of sobriety alone is not a qualification.

If an inaugural meeting indicates that the proposed club has the support needed for its establishment, it is time to consult a lawyer and have the club incorporated as a non-profit business organisation under the rules of the State in which it will function. Usually, a lawyer who is an AA member can be found to advise on this subject and it should not be a very complicated or expensive project. Incorporation is in accordance with *Tradition Six*, which implies that property to be used by members of AA should be separately incorporated and managed separately from AA itself, "... lest problems of money, property and prestige . . ." divert AA from its primary purpose. Needless to say, a club so incorporated should not have "AA" or "Alcoholics Anonymous" in its name. If bank loans are necessary, they should be taken out by directors of the corporation and payments should be made from club funds. Caution is suggested in committing future members to obligations they may not wish to assume - it is better to start small and enlarge as growth and finances warrant.

## BUSINESS DECISIONS

After the directors have been appointed and the club is incorporated, the members should meet to establish the basic parameters of the club - its aims and objectives, the way it should be run, etc, if this was not done at the inaugural meeting. Such a meeting may then require the board, or perhaps a director, to write the By-laws of the club, to be submitted to the membership for approval. After approval, of course, By-laws may be amended in the light of experience and as the By-laws themselves permit.



A most important facet of a club's activities is gambling: Much thought should be given to prohibiting gambling altogether. Time and again difficulties have been caused in existing clubs over the years because of gambling and in some cases there has been publicity and notoriety harmful to AA's image in the community. This kind of thing not only gives the club a bad name, it is also damaging to AA's primary purpose. Card games, pool, darts, table tennis, TV and the like are activities that club members enjoy as long as they are played for the fun of it, not for money.

Experience shows that CSOs and other AA services should be separate from clubs - physically separate and separate as far as administration is concerned - although the reasons are not clear. AA members should take a good look at *Tradition Nine* and remember that a Service Office is responsible to all AA Groups and members, while a club is responsible chiefly to its dues-paying members. Nevertheless, a Service Office may operate from club premises and still maintain its separate identity and integrity if the staff, paid or voluntary, are aware of the need for them to remain separate.

## AA GROUPS MEETING IN CLUBS

It is important that each Group maintains its autonomy and identity separate from the club in which it meets. The Group's responsibility is to the suffering alcoholic and to the Fellowship as a whole, not to the club. In order to fulfil this primary purpose it is emphasised that

1. Each Group uses a name different from that of the club;
2. Each Group is self-supporting through its own contributions. This includes paying a fair rent for use of the facilities, maintaining a separate treasury, and making its own contributions (based on a *Group Donation Plan* such as the 60-30-10, 50-30-10-10 etc if it so wishes) directly to the local CSO (if there is one), General Service Office, District and Area;
3. Each Group, and therefore its meetings, is available to any alcoholic, club member or not, since the only requirement for Group membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. In other words, even though the Group meets in a club that may be composed exclusively of AA members, and many members of the Group may be club members too, the relationship of the AA Group itself to the club *should be the same as it would be to a church, hospital, school or the like in which it might rent space for its meetings*.
5. In the event of Al-Anon wishing to use club facilities for meetings, it is suggested that rent be charged, as with any Group using club facilities for its meetings.

## CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS (NORTH AMERICA)

An expression of opinion on clubs for AA members followed a discussion on this subject at the 1967 General Service Conference. It states: "The discussion on clubs noted that although there is no such thing as an AA club, many clubs have been identified with AA because they are organised and directed by AA members and membership of the club is limited to members of AA. Clubs where meetings are held and which are maintained for *Twelfth Step* work as well as social purposes can avoid difficulties by abiding by AA Traditions. They should not use the AA name, and should be organised apart from AA. They should not accept money from outside sources, being supported by membership dues and individual contributions from AA members only. The question of a paid membership in AA does not arise, since AA meetings held in clubs are open to all members of AA. The Conference voiced recognition of the fact that clubs should operate with the AA Traditions and abide by them to the fullest."

Further guidance was given by the 1972 (North American) General Service Conference, which advised that their General Service Office (our General Service Office equivalent in New York) should no longer accept contributions from clubs; this decision was based on returns from a questionnaire sent to all clubs. The answers indicated that the differences in club operating procedures were too great for GSO to be able to decide whether or not money received from a particular club was contributed by AA members only. (Of course, as implied above, GSO does accept contributions from AA Groups that meet on club premises.) In 1981, the General Service Conference recommended; ". . . that clubs not receive the AA literature discount." By reserving the discount privilege for AA Groups and their CSOs, the Conference once more indicated the status of clubs as separate organisations - the way they function best.

*Note: In Australia General Service Office does not give discounts to Groups, only to CSOs; and, in the case of Areas and Districts, for particular PI/CPC initiatives.*

## GUIDELINE NO GL-14

# CONVENTIONS & A.A. GATHERINGS

## HOW AA'S MAKE THEIR GET-TOGETHERS ENJOYABLE AS WELL AS EFFECTIVE IN CARRYING THE AA MESSAGE OF RECOVERY

### WHY AN AA GET-TOGETHER?

It's clear that AA gatherings beyond the group level have become an established part of AA life. The General Service Office and CSO websites and newsletters around Australia show how many Regional Forums, Area Conventions, Young People's Conventions, Rallies, 'Round-ups' and other AA events are being held by AAs throughout the country.

One reason for holding rallies/get-togethers/'AA events' is that it is a natural thing to do. Almost any association of people likes to take time out now and then to observe some phase of its own development. But in AA, such an event is far more than a routine cause for celebration. A get-together also sets up a useful opportunity to share the AA experience in a broader way.

What makes an AA event click for its participants? Well, 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 AA rally is "just a darned good AA meeting blown up big." Just watch members at any enthusiastic AA event 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".

But get-togethers require a lot of preliminary work and planning, as well as smooth direction while they are in progress. Now that AA has come of age, Regions and Areas may have Conventions and Forums attended by dozens to hundreds, so a get-together can actually be a major enterprise involving lots of people and money. Today, North American International Conventions often hosts tens of thousands. This Guideline has been prepared to offer suggestions for making AA get-togethers as enjoyable and as effective as possible. It retains its North American form, with some minor changes where our systems or language differ.

### GET-TOGETHERS COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES

As we see it, an AA get-together is almost any AA rally beyond the Group-meeting level. These range from special meetings of one evening's duration to longer events – Area or Region-wide weekend conventions. In Australia we usually distinguish between service meetings which have a service work focus and get-together meetings, which have an identification focus. Service meetings are usually referred to as 'Assemblies' or 'Forums', such as 'Area Assemblies', 'Public Information Forums' or 'Regional Forums'. See "Australian AA Service Manual": "The Area: - Area, Regional & National Conventions" and "Regional Forums". The term 'Conference' is usually kept for the annual Australian General Service Conference in Sydney.

The term 'Convention' most often refers to the annual Australian AA Convention, a major, international, networking and sharing event, hosted by different Regions in turn, but an occasional Area Convention is held. For information about the Australian National AA Convention see Guideline GL-15: *"The National Convention"*.

AA get-togethers will, most likely, be one of the following:

### **1. The Special Open Meeting:**

This kind of gathering can serve several useful purposes. It will, of course, bring together the AA members in a city or area. But it also provides a good opportunity to invite interested friends of AA to the meeting. Certainly, it is 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 AA. Formal or informal meals may be involved.

### **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 get-together 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 AA workshops and panels, service meetings, assemblies, and closed meetings. (Usually Member-catered) informal barbecues, or shared meals may be included.

### **3. The Dinner - Dance**

In North America, many Intergroups or Central Offices now sponsor annual banquets, often to help support their office operations. Some Groups and Areas also have banquets as anniversary or gratitude observances. These are often held on a Saturday night or Sunday afternoon, sometimes in conjunction with a larger AA convention. The meal often features an after-dinner speaker or some other program of interest to AA members. In Australia, banquets, dinners or dinner-dances are less common than barbecues and less formal gatherings, being most frequently associated with National Conventions, Regional Forums, Area Conventions, significant anniversaries, and Public Information events for the local professional community, or fund-raisers to support bigger AA events or objectives.

### **4. The Weekend Convention or Forum**

This is an ideal form for a Regional or Area Forum or Convention or a Public Information (service) Forum. Members often arrive for an opening meeting session or "coffee and conversation" on Friday evening. Additional meetings and workshops – as well as other activities – continue through Saturday, usually up to Sunday lunch time. The meeting may include relaxation opportunities such as a banquet, luncheons, special breakfasts, barbecues, Saturday-night dancing and entertainment, and perhaps a spiritual meeting on Friday or Saturday night or Sunday morning – possibly visiting a local AA Group.

## **THE GET-TOGETHER BEGINS WITH A PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Once a get-together has been scheduled, it needs a planning committee. For, unless it's a very small affair, the work in setting up a get-together is too much for any one person. He or she may need at least a dozen assistants, and frequently more.

One convenient 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 is sponsoring a get-together – 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 get-together may be the responsibility of the General Service Committee from the Area(s). In others, the event committee may be organised separately. Either method works well if it corresponds to the wishes of the AA Groups in the Area. In Australia most large events are hosted by local committees set up for the purpose, 'one event at a time'. The roles are similar to those in North America, but the committee sizes and the scope of activities are typically smaller.

Once assembled, the Event (often referred to as the 'Host') Committee is usually organised along functional lines, with each convenor or coordinator responsible for a role in the planning. Here's how typical committee roles and responsibilities might be arranged:

### **1. Chairperson**

(assisted by either Co-chairperson or Assistant Chairperson if any)

- Runs the entire convention;
- Co-ordinates the work of sub-committee chairpersons;
- Keeps informed on the progress of all the arrangements;
- Calls committee meetings when they're 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;
- Sends invitations to speakers and panel members who lead various meetings.

### **3. Treasurer**

- Is, of course, responsible for all money, including revenues from registration and banquet tickets;
- Early in the planning period sees that an auditor is appointed who may be asked to advise on the setup of an appropriate financial records system, GST etc. (See also Guideline GL-15, Appendix IV);
- 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 cheque usually calls for two signatures.)

Most Event Committees require a complete report from the Treasurer within a month or two of the get-together. Some committees have the report audited as a further safeguard for Convention funds.

### **4. Program**

Since this is often a very complex job, its objectives are discussed under the separate heading "*What Makes a Good Convention Program?*"

### **5. Registration**

Supervises the printing and distribution of all tickets, giving special attention to the task of bringing in the collections.

## 6. Public Information

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

- a) Preparation and distribution of material about the intention, time, and location of the get-together (perhaps including map of area, if necessary). Most events now use websites, email, CSO newsletters, Regional magazines and flyers to advertise. The publicity material should also be sent to the press, radio, and TV outlets in the immediate area. (The "Public Information Workbook", available from General Service Office, gives useful advice on approaching the media.)
- b) In Australia, internal advertising for the National Convention and any associated fund-raising events must be held back until after (or during) the preceding National Convention. The National Convention and certain other service events can be advertised on the national AA website. See Guideline GL-26: "*Operation of the National AA Website* [www.aa.org.au/](http://www.aa.org.au/). Smaller scale events are usually promoted in the relevant local (usually CSO) newsletters and websites. Dates and location of the event, with a mailing address or other contacts for information or registration, should be sent three months in advance.

In line with Tradition 11, if you are using social media groups to provide information on your event, ensure that any pages are set up as secret pages; that anonymity is not compromised and that the page is accessible only by members who have elected to join the group. Members should not be added without their prior permission.

## 7. Entertainment

In North America, an Entertainment Chairperson will arrange for the dances and floor show if any. The chairperson hires the band and other performers (or arranges for taped or recorded music). This chairperson might also arrange to make sightseeing available for conventioners. At some events, the local AAs provide entertainment by putting on plays about AA groups, or putting together choruses and variety shows. In Australia, General Service Office has a script for the popular "*Traditions Play*" that has been approved as a service item by Conference. Events below National Convention level would not normally have entertainment on a large scale.

## 8. Hospitality

Serves as Host, for big events organising a committee that will greet out-of-town guests, arrange transportation for them when necessary, and see to any other needs they might have. Usually members of the hospitality/greeters committee wear special ID badges or garments such as Aprons or Waistcoats, so that they are visible, and ready to answer questions and provide assistance to participants.

## 9. Displays and Literature.

Is responsible for displays and posters and for having AA literature available for all. General Service Office provides literature on request, or will lend large banners (such as *The Twelve Steps*, the *Twelve Traditions*, *The Twelve Concepts*; Unity, Declaration, and Responsibility Pledge. They normally staff a sales table at large events such as National Conventions.

As a suggestion a table should be made available, for Flyers advertising upcoming Rallies, Roundups, Tag-A-Longs or AA events. Only material relating to AA events should be displayed.

## PAYING THE BILLS

How the costs of a rally covered, and what can be done to make sure that the venture won't go deep in the red? Some events may involve spending many thousands of dollars, so the Committee must have a fair picture of the financial arrangements long before the event opens. There's no substitute for common sense here: the Committee must take a businesslike approach to finances and keep expenditure somewhere within a conservative estimate of anticipated revenues. It is suggested that a budget be prepared. Preparing a budget for any AA event is financially responsible and accountable. As for financing the event, several sound methods seem to be in general use:

### 1. The Underwriting Method for Local Regional, Area or District Get-togethers

For local events, the Groups in the Area, perhaps through their representatives on the event *Host Committee*, or the Area itself, agree(s) to underwrite the complete costs of the get-together. 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 event and to know where the break-even point lies. Registration fees cover services. They are not collected to pay for AA meetings.

### 2. The Local (Regional Forum or) Convention Fund

One method of covering deficits, provided it is done with tact and sufficient explanation, is to take up a special collection at the Forum or Area or local PI Convention. But if the Groups have already been consulted and have agreed to underwrite the event, making up the deficit is their ultimate responsibility.

Most get-togethers, however, make a surplus. What's to be done with these surplus funds? Part may be held in trust for next year's event. Then the Committee uses the balance to help support local service offices or General Service Office. In accordance with our *Seventh Tradition*, only funds attending the event should be contributed to support AA activities.

Groups and Districts should be careful not to neglect their Group/District/area/ CSO and GSO in order to support Conventions.

### 3. The Australian National Convention

The underwriting system is different for the National Convention and the national Public Information Forum, as these are considered subcommittees of the General Service Board, which underwrites the event and receives any net surplus funds. See Guideline GL-15: "*The National Convention*".

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD PROGRAM?

### 1. The Meeting Theme

Often it's easier to plan the overall program by organising it around a simple theme.

This does not mean that the entire program must be devoted to the theme idea; it does, however, serve as a reminder *that an AA get-together advances the common purpose of AA.*

## 2. Main Features – Dinner-Dance; Open Meetings etc.

In planning a rally, program chairpersons usually schedule several large open meetings throughout the event, although not necessarily in immediate succession. A Saturday night dinner may also serve as an open meeting, with a speaker following the meal.

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

## 3. Panels

Many program chairpersons schedule workshops and panel sessions to provide suitable activities without overloading the program with open meetings.

Workshops and panels may take a variety of forms. The session may be followed by a question-and-answer period

Try to make time for the Q&A, as it encourages involvement. Use a roving microphone.

On the subject of panels, we would like to say a word about general service. Experience has shown us that topics such as “How the General Service Office Works” or “Why GSO?” attract only a small audience and therefore do not carry the message in a satisfactory fashion. We find that GSO staff members can best be used as speakers on regular panels – where their familiarity with AA worldwide can add an extra dimension to the presentation. In Australia, such service topics are usually reserved for Regional Forums and other service meetings, and at larger meetings General Service Office staff are more often than not invited to speak about the role of General Service Office. Unlike North America, we usually find this to create great interest and increased understanding: much needed in our rather decentralised situation.

Any one of our dedicated Trustees (especially your own Regional Trustee) would be invaluable on such topics as “*AA and Responsibility*”. They are in a crossroads position where they are aware of our Fellowship – particularly on the public level – and at the same time have an overall perspective on our purposes, strengths, and weaknesses. They can be of great value in helping us learn more about worldwide AA.

Also, don't forget your own GSRs, committee members, and Delegates. From their work in carrying the message outside their own Groups, they'll have lots of ideas on such panel subjects as “*Is AA Changing?*”, “*AA at Work, Then and Now*”. Again, we suggest you avoid putting these people all on one panel; many other AAs – old-timers and not-so-old-timers – have worthwhile information or thoughts on such subjects.



Here are some suggested topics appropriate for workshops and panels:

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

TREATMENT CENTRES

PUBLIC INFORMATION

CO-OPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

SPONSORSHIP

SERVICE

GSRs

*TWELVE TRADITIONS*

*TWELVE CONCEPTS*

INTERGROUPS

CENTRAL OFFICES

ANONYMITY

SINGLENES OF PURPOSE

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

PREDATORS IN AA

'Balance' and 'flow' are to key words in the planning of a 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 ensure maximum interest and participation is to farm out each meeting, workshop, or panel to a different Group or Area within the rally's territory. Thus, the Groups themselves plan and organise the meetings, always working closely with the general program chairperson to assure balance in the overall planning.

#### **4. Care of Speakers**

Many larger events these days feature speakers from out of town, sometimes AA 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 speaker's behalf:

Most Members enjoy hearing speakers from other countries; however, using members' contributions to fund travel and accommodation expenses of such speakers to attend conventions and rallies in Australia requires careful consideration. This should include whether members knew before they donated that their contributions were to be used towards travel and accommodation for overseas speakers.

Ideally speakers from overseas should be selected from those already booked to attend, and who are self-funding. However if a committee believes that there is a unique speaker, they should put forward a valid argument to their group conscience.

The practice of individual members funding speakers to attend should be avoided, particularly if the group conscience has decided, for whatever reason, not to fund the speaker.

It is also worth reminding ourselves of the following statement which appears in our publication "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" under Tradition 12: *'we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as AA members both among fellow alcoholics and before the general public'*.

Funding members to speak could be considered to be disregarding this tradition.

Should and Area or District invite a Trustee, (other than the Regional Trustee), GSO staff member/s, World Service Delegates or National Co-ordinators to attend an area or District event (excluding Regional/National forums and approved special events), the cost of travel, accommodation, meals and registration of the guest/s should be covered by that Area or District

### **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.

### **Speaking Arrangements**

Speakers should know when they're expected to speak and whether their presence is also required elsewhere in the program. (Some speakers may be unable to attend the entire event). 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. Apart from their exact role(s) in the meeting, they also, especially for prepared speeches, appreciate having the courtesy of generous notice as to the topic or theme and the duration of their contribution, together with details of that session's theme and any other speakers and subjects in the same bracket.

### **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 accommodation, as well as transportation, other conveniences and necessities such as appropriate meals.

## GUARDING AGAINST ANONYMITY BREAKS

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

**“Our anonymity, like our sobriety, is a treasured possession. We ask the help of our guests – especially those representing the press of broadcasting media – in protecting the anonymity of all alcoholics present or mentioned here today.**

**We hope you hear something at this meeting which you can take away with you and use. We respectfully request, however, that you eliminate any mention of names in reference to Members of Alcoholics Anonymous.”**

Or this:

### **Anonymity Statement**

**There may be some here who are not familiar with our tradition of personal anonymity at the media level.**

**The public relations policy of Alcoholics Anonymous is based on attraction rather than promotion. We need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and internet (chat room or Social) media.**

**Therefore we respectfully ask that no AA member be identified by full name or photograph in published or broadcast reports of this meeting.**

It's hardly likely that any newspaper or broadcasting station these days will fail to co-operate with this request; not only is the AA principle of anonymity well known generally, but General Service Office has advised the press and broadcasters year after year of AA's position in 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 Event 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 recognised by anybody remotely familiar with them or their work.

In one case, for example, a university professor had been invited to address a large AA 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 AA, as well as the individual Member.

## MISCELLANEOUS TIPS ON GOOD EVENT MANAGEMENT

When your committee is discussing the get-together, consider contacting General Service Office about the 'learned from' database they keep for the National Convention; also go over the things you liked and didn't like at past events. Pay special attention to those matters that caused petty irritations and annoyances; most likely, they can be avoided. Here are a few closing suggestions:

### 1. Name Tags

AA rallies don't seem to be right without identification tags. See that they're in bold print or felt pen, large, dark-coloured print on a light background, so people can read them at a glance and at a distance.

At the same time, try not to subject guests to more than a few minutes' wait in registering for the convention and picking up their tags or labels. Organise the registration so the process will flow smoothly and quickly. It's really preferable to have a rego desk person do the writing – so it is not invisible!

### 2. Coffee

It's an essential feature – plenty of coffee and coffee sessions throughout the event. Don't forget, some AAs 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. Remember that some prefer tea, or non-cafeinated or herbal teas or coffee substitutes for health reasons. And all sorts of milk, and sugar and sugar substitutes!

### 3. Accessibility

At large rallies, it's sometimes necessary to hold some of the open meetings in buildings other than the one used as event headquarters. Don't forget to ensure that wheelchair access and bathroom facilities are available.

### 4. Hotel and Motel Registrations

Often, printed lists of local accommodation, giving prices and other information, are available from local tourist information centres or agencies. If possible, send these lists out with the registrations and give members a chance to make their reservations long before the convention.

Be sure to include the lower-priced hotels and cabins or tent sites in caravan parks, and Air B&B information, Youth Hostels and backpacker lodges.

### 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. Literature

Event Committees can pass along important AA information in an attractive and painless way by using displays.

Consult the Literature Order Form for listing of other useful material, or consult General Service Office for suggestions.

## 7. Don't Compete With Last Year

While it's best not to try to compete with previous conventions, if you're the convention chairperson, you will naturally want to benefit from the experience of previous convention committees.—In Australia, ask General Service Office about the National Convention database.

## 8. Sound System

It's Vital to have an efficient sound system as well as at least one roving mic for Q&A sessions. If the event is being recorded, make sure to repeat the questions into the mic so that there are not big blanks in the recording and someone answering a question nobody heard.

Inform the audiences that they are being recorded, unless they object.

## AA AND AL-ANON

The following questions often arise:

### **How may AA and Al-Anon co-operate in Area and Regional Conventions and get-togethers?**

In accordance with the principle of non-affiliation, a convention would be either AA or Al-Anon – not both. However, most AA convention committees invite Al-Anon to participate by planning its own part of the program, and the committee arranges for facilities for the Al-Anon meetings.

### **Should an AA event 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 “co-operation but not affiliation,” it is suggested that AA should not make gifts or contributions to Al-Anon. By the same token, AA should not accept contributions from Al-Anon.

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

## AA AND OTHER 12-STEP FELLOWSHIPS

From its earliest days, AA's traditions and literature have stressed the importance of its *Singleness of Purpose*. Statements of *Singleness of Purpose* are often read out as a routine at the beginning of AA Meetings. They are no less relevant in the context of a larger AA event. It is therefore suggested that something like the following be read out before each day's proceedings begin:

*Mindful of our obligation to AA Unity, and the necessity for our ultimate survival to stick to AA's Singleness of Purpose, we ask all speakers to confine their contributions to their alcoholism. Brief mention of other addictions may be made where they form an important part of the drinking story, but speakers are asked not to dwell on those aspects.*

*As Bill W. said in 1958, “We have to confine our membership to alcoholics and we have to confine AA groups to a single purpose. If we don't stick to these principles we shall almost surely collapse. And if we collapse, we cannot help anyone.” (Grapevine).*

## BOUQUETS AND BRICKBATS

We hear from many of you before, during, and after events and so have a unique opportunity to know what pleases and does not please event-goers. For your quick reference here are some of the points most often made, and for want of a better term, we'll call them 'dos' and 'don'ts'.

### DO

- Plan ahead. Detailed plans for programming, physical arrangements and entertainment should be made well in advance.
- Be clear about the purpose of the meeting: is it service? celebration? PI? identification? networking?
- Choose speakers with care and brief them on their part in the overall program plan.
- Use 'service' speakers on a variety of subjects, such as sponsorship, institutions.
- Have plenty of free time for coffee sessions and informal get-togethers.
- Think 'system': to prevent backtracking and chaotic delays, at busy moments such as registration and meals: eg have a comprehensive system to cover all possible demands at registration, think system when setting up coffee and meal queues so that the items are placed in logical order, also ensuring that catering is timely and adequate.

### DON'T

- Don't lump all 'service' speakers (General Service Office people, Delegates, GSRs) in one bunch for a panel or meeting on service *per se*. Almost everything we do in AA is service, and it's best not to separate it from other topics.
- Don't over-program, scheduling too many meetings on too many subjects. Especially, avoid the three-ring-circus confusion of too many meetings at one time.
- Don't try to outdo yourself each year. Competition with yourself or others often leads to undue stress and unbalanced budgets.

## GUIDELINE NO GL-15

## THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

The Australian National Convention is under the direct sponsorship of the General Service Board (GSB) of Alcoholics Anonymous, Australia. The GSB is ultimately responsible for all aspects of any Australian Convention, including finance. It underwrites the Conventions and with that responsibility carries ultimate authority.

### THE HOST PLANNING COMMITTEE (HPC)

Although Conference now approves Convention bids five years in advance, there is no need to form the HPC more than two years prior to the event. Even then it may only be necessary to form an interim committee (eg Chairperson, Deputy Chair, and Treasurer) for the purpose of securing a venue.

An Area intending to host a National Convention ought to be responsible for consulting with other Areas in their Region prior to submitting a bid. Bids to host National Conventions are to be submitted as Conference Topics, by the usual Topic submission deadline, to give the Fellowship an opportunity to participate in the decision for approval.

Eighteen months to two years ahead is generally ample time to form the full Committee, prepare a budget to obtain seed funding from the General Service Board and appoint an auditor. Retiring HPCs now send a Report to General Service Office with positive and negative experience and recommendations for the national database. This information is passed on to HPCs of future Conventions as they become available. This way no-one need waste time reinventing the wheel.

Lead times are, of course, optional – different conditions will apply to each host city. Nevertheless, experience has shown that an excessive lead time can result in a large turnover of committee members due to burn-out and unforeseen circumstances.

All National Convention Committees are sub-committees of the GSB which requests that the HPC include:

- The Regional Trustee;
- The local Area Delegate(s)
- Experienced AA members to fill the essential portfolios.

It should also be borne in mind that Al-Anon has a valuable contribution to make to any AA Convention; it is strongly suggested that Al-Anon should be invited to provide at least one member to serve on the HPC.

The Chairperson of the General Service Board (GSB) is an *ex officio* member of the HPC. Local conditions will determine the final structure. Depending on the availability of volunteers and the size of the task, most functional positions may need to be assisted by small committees. For a suggested structure of the HPC, see Appendix No I.

In seeking volunteers to be of service as members of the Host Planning Committee and its sub-committees, it is recommended that an application form, similar to that attached as Appendix V of this guideline, to help ensure that suitably qualified members can be placed in available positions.

A job description for each position should also be made available.

## CONVENTION CHAIRPERSON

The first function of the HPC is to appoint a Convention Chairperson; it is suggested that the Regional Trustee fill this position. A deputy should also be elected to cover any absence of the Chair. These two officers will establish and maintain close contact throughout the duration of the committee; between them, they coordinate the work of the sub-committees. They should not forget, however, that there is a committee to assist them in this task. Experience has also shown that the majority of policy decisions throughout the planning stages are best made and implemented through the group conscience process, that is, consensus of opinion, but it must always be borne in mind that the Chairperson is responsible to the GSB for all aspects of the Convention.

In the event that the Regional Trustee rotates off the Board prior to the Convention, the Deputy Chairperson will be invaluable to the new Trustee stepping in.

## CONVENTION AUDITOR

An early function of the HPC should be to appoint a qualified Public Auditor *who is independent of the Fellowship* and who should be directly responsible to the HPC. All correspondence from the auditor should be directed to the Secretary.

Seed money (see also heading “Fund Raising”, below) will not be advanced to National Convention Committees until a letter of appointment from an appropriately qualified auditor has been sighted by the General Service Office Management Group.

It is important to note, as the Convention Audit forms part of the audited accounts of the General Service Board, that the Convention Audit must be completed and in the hands of the General Service Office by the end of July to ensure that the General Service Board accounts are ready for the National Audit.

## CONVENTION SECRETARY

The Convention Secretary is required to:

- keep all written records of the HPC;
- distribute notices and minutes of committee meetings to committee members and to the Chairperson of the GSB and the Trustee's Coordination & Review Committee at General Service Office;
- control all inwards and outwards correspondence. All outward correspondence from the Committee should be from the Secretary except in specific circumstances, as required by the Committee or Chairperson. Similarly, all inward correspondence from any source should be directed to the Convention Secretary who will distribute it to the appropriate officer or portfolio for action. (The various sub-committees should be responsible for their own correspondence, but they should direct copies to the Secretary and inform the Committee of their correspondence at the first opportunity).



## CONVENTION TREASURER

Experience suggests that the Convention Treasurer be a person of considerable business experience with several years of sobriety; indeed, there is much to be said for the appointment of a professional accountant as Treasurer. Such an expense may be justified by the ease, speed and accuracy with which such a person could provide service and information to the HPC, which often has our well-meaning amateurs struggling. The Treasurer is Chairperson of the Finance Sub-Committee and is responsible for providing up-to-date and accurate financial records to the HPC and the GSB at all times, and ultimately the Convention Auditor. He/she also makes arrangements for a Convention bank accounts, for which there should be at least two signatories. It is suggested that these comprise the Host Committee Chairperson or Treasurer and one of two others.

The Treasurer should remind all concerned that when raising funds for National Conventions, AA cannot accept any monies from outside agencies or persons.

The Treasurer monitors the amounts expended against budgets and provides an up-to-date set of accounts for each committee meeting. He/she is also responsible for ensuring that adequate public risk, accident and money-in-transit insurance is arranged and that the Convention is protected from all liability.

The Treasurer ensures that adequate credit card facilities, cash registers, bank accounts and night safe facilities are available for banking purposes during the Convention.

All Convention proceeds should be forwarded to General Service Office after the final audit of the Convention accounts.

Once the officers have been elected, next comes the formation of the various sub-committees to execute the many tasks essential to bring a Convention into being.

## FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Finance Committee (FC), chaired by the Treasurer, is responsible, with the sub-committees, for setting the budgets for each portfolio and for assisting each portfolio to stay within its budget; alternatively, each sub-committee may be required to prepare its own budget, which must be approved by the HPC. The FC will thereafter monitor financial performance with respect to the relevant budgets. The FC is also responsible for setting a realistic Registration Fee, remembering that this is a fee to cover services offered - it is not collected to pay for AA meetings.

Members of the Finance Committee form the nucleus of the finance team at the Convention and are responsible for all on-site money transactions. The FC also ensures that all money collected is accounted for and banked each day in a night safe deposit and that no cash is left on site overnight. During the period of the Convention it keeps a daily cash up-date and daily advises the Chairperson of the financial situation.

It has been found most advantageous to use a laptop computer to store all financial data, including registrations. The computer can be taken to the Registration Desk at the Convention and on-the-spot registrations added to the data; thus all financial information is readily available. It also eliminates a lot of time-wasting hassle when Members forget or mislay their registration documents.

The Finance Committee, with the Treasurer, is responsible to the General Service Board for the on time audit of the Convention accounts and must ensure that the audit is forwarded to the General Service Office Manager before the end of July to ensure compliance with the audit of the General Service Board accounts.

## FUND RAISING

The Region that intends to bid for the Convention should realise, prior to making a bid that they are responsible for the funding of the Convention. The underwriting by the GSB should be regarded as an emergency recourse only. All National Conventions involve large sums of money and the Committee needs to have a clear appreciation of what the financial situation is going to be before the Convention opens for business. The Committee needs to take a business-like approach to finance to ensure that expenditure is kept within a conservative estimate of anticipated revenues. Wishful thinking is no substitute for a well-developed plan for fund raising and a sound strategy for carrying out that plan.

A plan often adopted in Australia is the Groups in the Region getting together with the Committee to develop a fund-raising 'barometer' so that they can see clearly what is happening financially on a month-by-month basis. What this means in practical terms is that the Groups, through their GSRs, agree to raise and underwrite the complete costs of the event, under the ægis of the General Service Office and the Board. The Board is responsible for all debts incurred in staging National Conventions including an overall deficit, should there be one.

The Board has resolved that, at its discretion, a refundable amount of \$10,000 seed money be provided to National Convention Committees, which is returned after the accounts are settled after the Convention. A detailed provisional budget must be submitted and approved by the Coordination & Review Committee of the General Service Board before this funding will be released.

Seed money **will not be advanced** to National Convention Committees until a letter of appointment of an appropriately qualified author have been sighted by the Coordination and & Review Committee of the General Service Board.

A thought to be borne in mind: if the fund-raising activities are too vigorous in the opening stages of the Convention campaign, it will inevitably come to pass that as the date of the Convention draws near, enthusiasm for subscribing money will falter. It has been found better to run a campaign that leads up to a climax a few months before the Convention.

Groups and Districts should be careful not to neglect their Groups/Districts/Area/ CSO and GSO financial donations in order to support Conventions.

## COMMUNICATION

It may be deemed unnecessary to form a separate sub-committee to perform this function. For example, decisions regarding what letters/flyers to issue can be made by the HPC and the flyers can then be designed by the Printing sub-committee. Letters can properly be described as part of the Secretary's duties and anyway, the Secretary is responsible for distributing all communications.

The HPC should make every effort to contact all the Groups in the Region individually and acquaint them with details of the forthcoming Convention as soon as possible once the project is under way. All Groups should be sent letters announcing the Convention, enclosing registration forms for early registration. An excellent way of gaining Group support is to actually show the members what they will receive as 'early birds'. It should be possible to set up a Convention website, giving details of the Convention, together with an email link. It is also important that all Groups be aware that the Convention is financed as a special effort on the Groups' part and that it should be kept separate from their normal fund-raising activities. It is hoped that as our Fellowship grows, future Conventions can be financed from an overall

National Convention Fund contributed to by Groups on a regular basis - not achieved as yet, but a commendable goal at which to aim.

No information/promotion concerning International/National Conventions should be distributed outside the host region until the previous Convention commences.

## VENUE AND CATERING

Nothing ensures the success of a Convention more than early attention to this portfolio. Whenever a discount or subsidy is partly or in total offered because we are Alcoholic Anonymous, it must be declined.

- **IMPORTANT:** Since GSB underwrites the Convention, the venue **MUST** be approved by the GSB before any contract is agreed.
- **Dining Facilities:** Many members attending will want to stay all day, which means that they will be looking for adequate luncheon or dinner facilities within the Convention complex or close by. An on-site cafeteria is ideal.
- **Coffee:** Non-members find it difficult to deal with the idea that we can consume up to 20,000 cups of coffee at a Convention. Experience indicates that where possible, provision of coffee is placed in the hands of the venue staff (or a caterer) at an agreed price. It is to the benefit of all if AA sells tickets for coffee, which are tendered to the staff at the urns; staff do not then have to handle money and give change and can concentrate on serving only. **[NOTE: The cash tendered for some 3-4000 cups per day cannot be held in a till; as the day proceeds, money will have to be removed from the till to some storage facility.]** It is also important to make sure that the venue (or caterer) is responsible for all supplies of consumables and utensils and for cleaning up.
- **Dinner Dance:** If a Dinner Dance is to be held, a hall capable of accommodating the anticipated number of people will be required, together with facilities for supper preparation and presentation. It must also be borne in mind that “a capacity of 600” generally means that the dance floor will accommodate only 300, it being assumed by hoteliers that only half of those present will want to dance at any one time. Past events have shown that at AA dinner-dances, everybody wants to dance!
- **All in together:** Experience suggests that all facilities should be housed under one roof. It helps people to familiarise themselves with the Convention layout, especially if good directions are provided regarding the locations of the various functions and facilities.
- **Childcare/Childminding:** Each Convention needs to consider this in the light of both State and Federal legislation regarding the question of qualified staff, insurance, public liability and possible alliances with political causes or points of view. Any childminding needs to be contracted out to professionals.
- **Meditation Room:** Many members find a need for a quiet time away from the crowd for personal prayer and meditation. A peaceful candle-lit room is ideal for this purpose.
- **Sharing Corners:** Last, but by no means least important, is having coffee lounges and quiet places available for members to sit and share experience with each other as well as catch up with old friends. Having places available ‘just to talk’ is an important requirement of any venue.

## TRANSPORT AND ACCOMMODATION

This sub-committee is responsible for providing as much information as possible on accommodation and transport to and from the site. The local tourist bureau/authority can supply such information, which should be sent to all CSOs and the General Service Office for dissemination. Don't assume that all members will require high-priced motels and hotels - make sure that information on caravan parks, hostels and other low-priced accommodation is included. It is also likely that some members may like to offer private accommodation for visiting members and that visiting members may well like to avail themselves of such an offer.

A member of the T&A sub-committee could be tasked with the job of Billeting Coordinator. During the Convention it may be possible to organise a transport pool, with members placing their vehicles at the disposal of the committee to transport out-of-towners and VIPs.

Consideration may be given to hiring a mini-bus to collect visitors from the airport or other terminals, but experience again has shown that visitors like to be picked up by members in their own cars. This not only gives them a feeling of welcome, but also involves a lot of local members in the Convention and after all, it is their Convention.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

This sub-committee has the task of providing as many people as possible inside and outside the Fellowship with as much information as possible while remaining within AA's principle of "attraction rather than promotion". Practical experience suggests the following:

- **Flyers:** Regular flyers and registration forms should be sent to all Groups within the Region and to all CSOs interstate for forwarding to their respective Groups. Each flyer should contain the dates and location of the Convention with a mailing address for posting registrations or enquiries.
- **Media Outlets:** A mailing list of all media outlets within the region should be drawn up together with contacts if possible; it should cover press, radio and television. Convention publicity material should be sent to each from time to time and especially as the Convention date approaches. The "Public Information Workbook" gives very helpful advice on approaching the media.
- **Mailing Lists:** A list of names and addresses of all relevant people in State and Local Government, industry, religion, treatment centres and agencies, education, trade unions and employer organisations should be prepared and a standard letter extending a general invitation to the Convention but specifically to the Public Meeting. These should be posted out about six weeks prior to the Convention. Invitations to dignitaries such as Governors, State Premiers, Archbishops and the like need to be sent out some nine months prior to the Convention date. It is also essential to nominate a telephone number for responses.
- **Video Tapes/Radio Spots:** Video tapes for use in community service slots on TV networks are available from General Service Office together with appropriate 30-second radio spots.
- **Live Interviews:** The media may make a request for a member to take part in a live interview on radio or television. It is usually wise to approach individual members to obtain their permission to have the names put forward should this request be made. The PI Workbook can be of invaluable assistance here. Remember that an important role of

Class A Trustees is to provide a public face for AA. This is one area where that role can be put to good use.

- **Advertising:** In line with Tradition 11, if you are using social media groups to provide information on your event, ensure that any pages are set up as secret pages, that anonymity is not compromised and is accessible only by members who have elected to join the group. Members should not be added without their prior permission.

## PROGRAMME

This is a complex job that requires dedication, tolerance, appreciation of other people's views and infinite patience with an eye to detail. (Only experienced saints need apply). Careful and imaginative thought well in advance of the Convention date is the key to success in this portfolio. Areas and/or Regions may propose the Convention's planned dates and duration when submitting bids for the National Convention.

### Formally Opening and Closing the Convention:

It is traditional and recommended that the Chairman of the General Service Board be invited to formally open and close the National Convention.

### Meetings:

It is usual to have a main Public Meeting with a guest or feature speaker (often one of our non-alcoholic Trustees) and a Spiritual Concept Meeting on the Sunday morning if possible. Large open meetings, arranged around various themes, bring a sense of unity to the Convention. Too many separate meetings can be tiresome and as a general rule, three or four theme meetings over a Convention weekend are sufficient. A continuous meeting, say 10am till 11pm, can provide maximum participation for conventioners.

### Non-English Speaking Meetings:

Our Conventions are progressively attracting more Members from overseas and from Australia who are not fluent in English. It is recommended that meetings in other languages be provided whenever needed. A Member or Members capable of communicating with these groups could coordinate these meetings.

### Deaf, Disabled & Other Special Needs Groups:

It is recommended that the consideration be given to facilitating the comfort, assistance, inclusion and relevant meetings that such Members may need or appreciate, including considering whether signing may be provided at the main events. See GL-18: *"Carrying the Message to the Hearing Impaired Alcoholic"*.

Australian National Conventions commonly include broadly-titled theme and special interest meetings such as *"Old Timers"*, *"Men"*, *"Women"*, *"LGBTQI"*, *"Young People"*, *"Indigenous"*, *"Steps"*, *"Traditions"*, *"Loners"*, *"Relationships"* etc. Some of these meetings may be closed.

### Panels and Workshops:

These provide one of the most rewarding activities and can take a variety of forms. A panel arrangement might comprise three speakers and a chairperson, with each person speaking on a number of Steps, Traditions or Concepts for World Service; the panel session can be followed by a short question-and-answer session.

It is strongly recommended that National Conventions incorporate a Service component in their programmes. Those attending National Conventions would gain from the opportunity to

hear of the experience, strength and hope of members who are doing great service in AA and the community.

Experience shows, however, that workshops or panels on such topics as "How the General Service Office Works" or "Why Have a GSR" or "What Does the Secretary Do?" attract only small audiences in a Convention setting. These subjects are better presented at specialised Service events, and in that case can be better handled by using General Service Office staff, utilising their familiarity with AA Australia-wide, while any of our Trustees would be delighted to speak on such topics as "How the General Service Board Works" or similar themes.

An effective way to ensure maximum interest, involvement and participation in a Convention is to give various Groups or Areas the responsibility of running a series of panels, workshops, meetings or discussion sessions. It is of great importance that the Groups or members then work closely with the Programme Co-ordinator to assure a good balance of speakers and participants in the overall planning. Topics and formats should always be the responsibility of the Convention Committee.

### Practical hints:

Finally, the Programme Committee may do well to consider the following matters to give balance and flow to the meetings and the Convention overall:

- A copy of the *"Big Book"* should be available for use by chairpersons at all meetings.
- A range of speakers, old and young in both years and sobriety, should be included on the list for the chairperson. There should also be an equitable balance between men and women speakers as well as participation by interstate and overseas visitors and various ethnic groups.
- As far as possible, speakers should be requested to be on hand prior to the commencement of the meeting.
- Meetings should start and finish on time.
- Allow time during the Convention for feedback sessions from the workshops.
- If sightseeing excursions are planned for members, ensure that they do not clash with the principal meetings at the Convention.
- Make sure that the Steps and Traditions banners are in place. ***[Large banners can be hired from the General Service Office]***

### Videos:

The videos *"Bill's Own Story"*, *"Bill Discusses the Twelve Traditions"*, *"Young people"*, *"Inside AA Australia"*, *"AA – An Inside View"*, *"Hope – Alcoholics Anonymous"*, *"AA – Rap With Us"* and *"One Day at a Time"* are all AA Conference-Approved and available from General Service Office. There is also a wealth of good material available on the subject of alcoholism that can be helpful in widening our own and our visitors' awareness of alcoholism. Prudence suggests that we use a disclaimer when showing any film which is not Conference-Approved. For an example of a suitable disclaimer see Appendix II. Suitable projection equipment is a necessity.

### Guests and Invited Speakers:

Most Conventions have a number of guest speakers. These may be members from interstate or one or more of our Trustees, or they may be others with a special interest or expertise within the field of alcoholism. Programme Co-ordinators have a responsibility when they book special "keynote" speakers to ensure the following:

- **Expenses:** Unless it is otherwise specified, the speakers need to know that their travel, meals and accommodation for the entire trip will be the responsibility of the Convention Committee. If it is intended to accommodate them as guests in private homes they should be informed of this at the outset.
- **Attendance:** They should be made aware that they will be expected to be at the Convention at required times, when rest times will be available to them, and how they will be transported to and from their accommodation. They should also be informed whether or not they will be expected to attend and possibly participate in other meetings. Most speakers will want to know something about the venue, e.g. whether there is a podium, a public address system and the length of time they should speak.
- **Keynote Speakers** should be requested to supply an abstract of their speech or better, a full transcript, at least one week before the Convention, while being assured that this is not an attempt to exercise any form of censorship. It allows copies to be duplicated and sent to the usual press outlets with requests that it not be published until after delivery (embargo). Keynote speakers should be well versed in both the value and the limitations of AA in the community.
- **Anonymity Breaks:** Conventions are usually covered by members of the press and it is customary to begin all meetings and workshops at a convention by asking the press, indeed, everyone's co-operation in protecting members' anonymity. For announcement see Appendix III.

The Host Planning Committee is encouraged, in consultation with our World Service Meeting delegates, to consider inviting an indigenous member from a developing country within the Asia/Oceania zone, to attend our National Convention.

Funding for such an initiative would come from the International Sponsorship Fund, so there would be no financial burden on the Host Planning Committee.

## LITERATURE

Previously part of the Programme sub-committee, this portfolio has been shown to work best as a separate entity. On the understanding that some items such as bulletins, magazines etc published by AA bodies cannot all be Conference-Approved, it is recommended that with the exception of these items, National Conventions sell only Conference-Approved literature. Most Areas are served by a CSO, and a simple way to organise literature for smaller events is to order from the local CSO (providing they approve), on a sale or return basis. Some form of discounting policy should be negotiable that is acceptable to both parties. Australian National Conventions normally invite the General Service Office to provide and manage the sales of literature, the HPC providing an estimate of needed supplies in good time to ensure stocks can be ordered if necessary. See note below on "Staff Participation".

Other types of literature needing sales locations at Conventions include World Service and Al-Anon.

As a suggestion a table should be made available, for Flyers advertising upcoming Rallies, Roundups, Tag-A-Longs or AA events. Only material relating to AA events should be displayed.

## PRINTING

Communication is the basis of all understanding and nobody needs to keep this in mind more than the sub-committee responsible for this portfolio. One of the first tasks to be considered will be a Convention logo. Once it has been approved by the GSB it can then be used on all letterheads and literature. Some important hints from previous experience:

- Settle on logo artwork as soon as possible.
- Try not to outdo previous Conventions in relation to quality, quantity or range of literature printed. Imaginative local input is the ideal.
- Try and keep the price and quality within the 'medium' price range and avoid ostentation.
- Remember, a Convention poster has limited use and usually can only be displayed at Service Offices.
- The programme should be clear and concise, and don't forget that all copy, design and artwork needs to be submitted to the Trustees' Coordination & Review Committee prior to printing. Nowhere does "keep it simple" seem more appropriate than this portfolio.

## HOSPITALITY COORDINATOR

Nothing sets the atmosphere of a convention so much as the warmth of a personal greeting and individual service to visiting Members that can be provided by a hospitality team. Their role is to welcome everyone arriving and give them all necessary information regarding meeting locations and available convention facilities. These 'hosts', through their coordinator, are thoroughly briefed on their roles beforehand and are rostered so that a sufficient number are always present whenever the Convention is operating. It is well to have some distinguishing mark (sash, uniform, blazer) provided for them and all Committee members.

## GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE STAFF PARTICIPATION

1. If the Convention Committee wish General Service Office staff to participate in the Convention, a written invitation should be issued to General Service Office as soon as possible.
2. The Committee should provide an adequate sized table for General Service Office to display material, which should be situated in a reasonably prominent position. General Service Office staff should not be expected to find their own location and equipment. A venue floor plan of space available (after allocation of space for registration desks) should be submitted to General Service Office to allow the Office to indicate its preference for the proposed location of General Service Office and International Desk displays.
3. It should not be expected that the General Service Office stand will be manned in the evenings.
4. Should the Committee wish General Service Office staff to speak at meetings or participate in panels, adequate notice of times and topics should be given.
5. Advertising: Should the committee wish flyers/registration forms to be distributed via AAAA, an adequate quantity (approximately 2000) should be despatched to arrive at General Service Office no later than 1st November, to be sent out with the December issue.



## **CENTRAL SERVICE OFFICE LIAISON**

As Central Service Offices are frequently the first and sometimes the only known contact for members enquiring about events within the Fellowship, it is important that all CSOs in the Region are kept fully informed on Convention activities. The cooperation of the CSOs is essential to the success of any Convention; a CSO Liaison Officer has proved to be an important member of the HPC.

## **NATIONAL ARCHIVIST**

Convention Committees should consider inviting the National Archivist to participate at the National Convention, to be available to provide information about the National Archives.

## **FILLING COMMITTEE VACANCIES**

Practical experience has shown that committee members are sometimes unable to give as much time and effort as their portfolios require. It is suggested that where any such member misses three consecutive committee meetings, someone else is invited to fill that position. This vacancy is usually filled from within that committee. If the previous member is later able to return, so much the better.

## **NON AFFILIATION**

Our independence should be protected at all times. We are not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution, we neither endorse nor oppose any causes. Because of this, the HPC should ensure that any religious services held for any group of conventioners should not be conducted or seen to be conducted as part of the Convention programme. A community notice board, where notices may be displayed for those who are interested in such services, may be placed in a prominent location.

## **AL-ANON LIAISON**

Experience has shown that co-operation between AA, Al-Anon and Alateen has greatly enriched the work of these Fellowships and an invitation to participate may be forwarded to Al-Anon via its local Area Office at the outset of planning. Usually two members, one from Al-Anon and one from Alateen, are invited to join the Host Committee and provision is usually made for Al-Anon and Alateen speakers at our main Public Meeting. It should be clearly stated at this meeting that Al-Anon is a separate Fellowship and not affiliated to Alcoholics Anonymous.

In accordance with the principle of non-affiliation, the Convention is run as an AA Convention with Al-Anon participation. Al-Anon is invited to participate by planning its own meetings and programme and the Host Committee organises the facilities for both Fellowships. In accordance with Tradition Seven, it is suggested that AA not make gifts to Al-Anon and vice-

versa. Registration monies should be kept separate and handled only by the respective Fellowships. Al-Anon will then take care of its own expenses from its separate income.

## **ON-SITE MANAGEMENT**

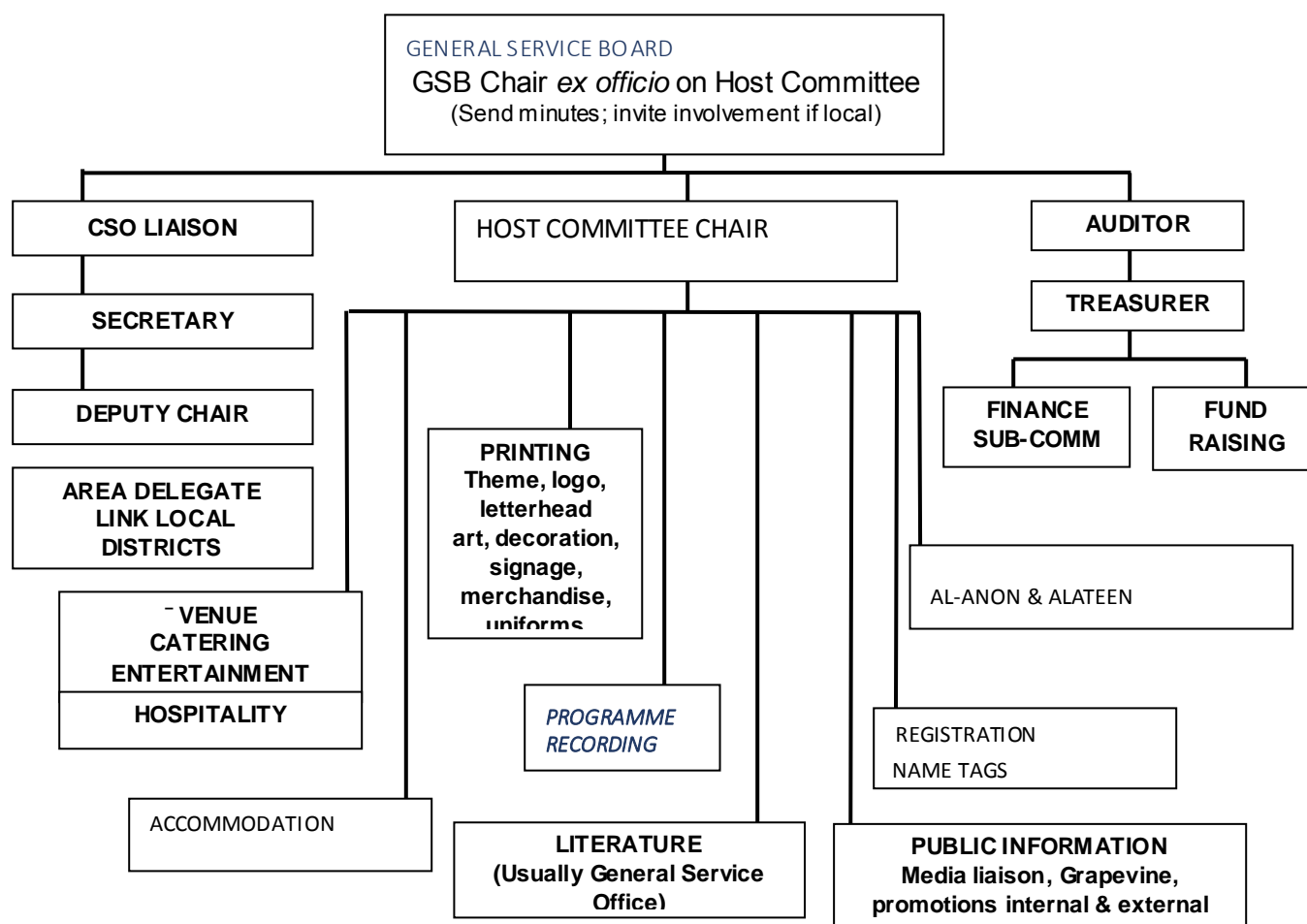
Once a Convention becomes a reality, it has been found that the most practical way of keeping it organised is to form a smaller committee for "on-site management" throughout the Convention. This committee, often comprising the sub-committee Chairpersons, meets early each morning to discuss the previous day and any potential problems looming in the current day. It should have the right to co-opt help when necessary, and to call a meeting of the Committee should the need arise. An alternative is to hold review meetings once or twice during the day, attended by as many members of the HPC as may be available.

## **WIND UP MEETING**

The last and very necessary meeting of the Host Committee should convene as soon as possible after all accounts have been paid and the audit completed, preferably within a month of the Convention. It is imperative that some members of the Convention Host Committee are charged with the responsibility of preparing the final Convention Report which is forwarded to General Service Office with for printing and distribution. It cannot be stressed too highly that the report on a National Convention be given the widest possible dissemination, to the AA membership as a whole, because, as has been stated before, "communication is the basis of all understanding."

# APPENDICES

## GL-APPENDIX I: SUGGESTED HOST COMMITTEE STRUCTURE



### GL-15 APPENDIX II: DISCLAIMER:

(NON AA CONFERENCE-APPROVED FILMS AND VIDEOS):

Some of the items depicted in these films and videos may be, but not necessarily are, contrary to AA philosophy. The showing of them does not mean that AA either endorses or opposes them, just that we have no opinion on them. They are offered solely for your enjoyment and information.

### GL-15 APPENDIX III: ANONYMITY:

There may be some here who are not familiar with our tradition of personal anonymity at the media level. Our public relations policy is based on attraction, not promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films. Therefore, we respectfully ask that no AA member be identified directly or indirectly by full name, public position or photograph in published or broadcast reports of this meeting.

## GL-15 APPENDIX IV: TAXATION REQUIREMENTS AND REPORTING A GUIDE FOR NATIONAL CONVENTION TREASURERS

In the case of charitable institutions, registration for Goods & Services Tax (GST) is optional if your annual turnover is less than \$150,000. You must be registered to be able to claim back any GST you have paid to suppliers.

For services such as venue hire and related costs GST paid can be a substantial amount, so, historically, most Convention Committees have opted to register for GST. However, if the Convention makes a surplus, which the General Service Board would expect, it is financially better not to register – this is because the Convention will also pay GST on the surplus. Not registering also avoids the administrative workload associated with GST.

To register for GST and claim input tax credits you must apply for an Australian Business Number (ABN). You can do this electronically on website [www.abr.gov.au/](http://www.abr.gov.au/) or on a paper form available by ringing the Australian Tax Office (ATO) on 1300 130 248.

Once registered for GST, you will need to do the following:

- Show your name, address and ABN on your letterhead. When issuing invoices (including invoices for registrations) for an amount greater than \$50.00 you also need to clearly show that this is a Tax Invoice. An example of a tax invoice is attached.
- Provide suppliers with your ABN.
- Keep Cash Book records of daily receipts and payments - these should include invoice numbers and supplier names for purchases and cheque numbers for payments.
- Keep a good filing system of records in case you have to substantiate a particular transaction. Records can be kept manually or electronically and must be kept for five years after completion of a transaction.
- Submit a Business Activity Statement (BAS). The BAS can be lodged monthly or quarterly - when registering you can elect to make monthly or quarterly lodgements. The Australian Taxation Office will send you this form prior to the required date of lodgement.

When purchasing goods and services you must obtain a tax invoice showing GST paid. Invoices of more than \$50.00 must show your supplier ABN, name and address, otherwise you need to withhold 48.5% from your payment. Any amounts withheld are noted and remitted with the next BAS.

Tax invoices are not required for purchases of less than \$50.00 you can still claim back the GST paid on these purchases, but you must have documentary evidence to support all GST credits claimed.

On the BAS you will need to show

- Total Sales
- Total Purchases
- GST collected on sales
- GST paid on purchases

If the GST on your sales is more than the amount on your purchases a refund of the difference is due to ATO from you.

If the GST on your sales is less than the amount on your purchases a refund will be due to you from the ATO.

**Remember - don't close your bank account until you have received your final BAS refund. The ATO will not issue a cheque to another entity so, if you have closed your bank account, you will have to re-open it to receive a refund cheque.**

You do not need to charge GST on

- Sales of donated 2<sup>nd</sup> hand goods or raffles
- If you are selling merchandise at less than 50% of market value or less than 75% of what you paid for them.

If you have decided to register for GST you do need to charge it on Convention registrations. You should calculate your registration fees accordingly and ensure that GST paid is shown clearly on all receipts issued. This is quite simple: GST is calculated as 1/11<sup>th</sup> of the total price, including GST.

## EXAMPLE OF TAX INVOICE

### TAX INVOICE

INVOICE NO:

Mr. J. Smith  
12 Smith Street  
Smithtown, 3000.

### NATIONAL CONVENTION

ABN 00 123 456 789  
PO BOX 123, SYDNEY. NSW 2000

DATE: 1 August 2004

QTY	DESCRIPTION OF GOODS OR SERVICE	AMOUNT	TOTAL
10	Registration Tickets	\$50	\$500.00
	GST		\$ 50.00
		<b>TOTAL INCLUDING GST</b>	<b>\$550.00</b>

Paid: (details, date, initials)

## APPENDIX V

### APPLICATION TO BE OF SERVICE TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION (YEAR) TO BE HELD IN (xxx)

NAME:

---

ADDRESS:

---

EMAIL ADDRESS:

---

TELEPHONE:

---

YEARS SOBER

---

OCCUPATION:

---

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:

---

OTHER SKILLS THAT MAY BE OF USEFUL SERVICE:

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Please send application to: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Or phone xxxxxx for further information.

## GUIDELINE NO GL-16

# TREATMENT AND CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES COMMITTEES

## HOW AA CARRIES THE MESSAGE TO ALCOHOLICS IN TREATMENT AND CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

In trying to help the alcoholic who is in a correctional facility (CF) or treatment facility (TF), AAs try to work together as much as possible by following suggestions from those who have already experienced growing pains in carrying the message to the patients in these facilities.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of CF and TF committees is to co-ordinate the work of individual AA members and Groups who are interested in carrying our message of recovery to alcoholics in these places, and to set up means of bridging the gap between them and the AA community.

Such a committee may function within the structure of a CSO or an Australian Service Conference (ASC) Committee or Area Committee. Prior to the formation of such committees, this *Twelfth Step* work is usually done by a single Group or member, but as the number of AA Groups in the community grows, these committees make the allocation of resources easier and consequently more effective than individual effort.

### DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Because of rapid growth (in US/Canada), the 1977 General Service Conference voted to dissolve its Institutions Committee and in its place formed two new committees, one for CFs and one for TFs. This division was created to provide better service to Groups and meetings in both kinds of facilities, so we use the designations Correctional Facilities Committees (CFCs) and Treatment Facilities Committees (TFCs) throughout these Guidelines.

In Australia, with a much smaller population of Members, we combine the two, and call them "Treatment & Correctional Facilities Committees" at Conference level. However for many of the CSO and Area level committees, due to shortage of volunteers, the function is often combined with that of public information and cooperation with the professional community. Thus the activities PI & CPC committees undertake will include all types of information and communication activities in their own right or in association with AA events, as well as servicing Groups or individuals in institutions where there is no other structure.

Local conditions and resources will determine what actually happens.

## HISTORY

Some of the early history of AA's work in hospitals, prisons and rehabilitation centres is outlined in the book "AA Comes of Age". When only a few of the early Groups had been formed, it was soon apparent that many alcoholics needing help were to be found in hospitals or prisons. Naturally, early Members wanted to carry the AA message to alcoholics who were not able to attend meetings on the outside, but prison and hospital regulations did not permit visitors to enter these institutions to contact the alcoholic directly. Consequently, the first efforts were made through the administrative personnel. In 1939 the Superintendent of Rockland State Hospital, a New York mental institution, was approached and agreed to the establishment of one of our first AA Hospital Groups. Similarly, the late Warden Duffy of San Quentin Prison responded favourably and in 1942 permitted the first AA Group in a prison. These examples were the forerunners of thousands of Groups in North American treatment and correctional facilities; many meetings now meet in such facilities throughout the world and many regular AA Groups hold meetings in treatment facilities.

Since many alcoholics in correctional facilities cannot come to regular AA Group meetings, we need to go to them. We can continue to do the same kind of work that the early AAs did in San Quentin and Rockland State. Once Groups are started, they need further help to continue to function - speakers, literature, sponsorship, information about how to conduct their meetings inside etc - and it has been found that wherever a well-organised committee is functioning, T&CF Groups grow and flourish. As well, their members' transition from the facility to the outside is made in the best possible way. Those who have accepted the message in a facility generally continue to be active in AA on the outside.

Occasionally, a committee on Co-operation with the Professional Community (CPC committee) will establish the initial contact with the facility. Where these functions are separate, in these instances the various committees have an opportunity to share their experience with one another, enhancing communication between them.

Alcoholics in TFs are generally more fortunate, able to attend the meetings of any AA Group that uses the treatment centre for its meetings, and often to other meetings in the community. An AA meeting is frequently part of the treatment programme, though this type of meeting is not necessarily open to all AAs; members of T&CFs are usually invited by the centre officials to carry the message into the centre.

In North America it has been found that as the number of Groups increases, each Group and individual member should be given the opportunity of sharing in T&CF *Twelfth Step* work. To do this as effectively as possible it has proved a good idea to select a member of each Group to serve on the T&CF committees. Plans can be worked out so that each CF and TF Group in the area will be assured of AA help. When there is a CSO, its steering committee often includes the chairpersons of the CF and TF committees.

When these committees are not a part of the CSO structure, it has proved helpful to have a member of the Area Committee serve as chairperson for the entire Area. This chairperson works in co-operation with local T&CF committees, relays information to them from meetings of the Conference Committees on CFs and TFs, held during the annual General Service Conference, and shares Conference thinking and experience on the matter. To give you an idea of how a successful committee can function, an example follows. We think you may get some ideas from this material, whether you are a Lone member, a member of a Group, a Central Office committee, a District Committee or an Area Committee, as long as you're eager to co-operate and help to carry the AA message into these facilities.



## **EXAMPLE OF A T&CF COMMITTEE IN ACTION (N.AMERICA)**

A small committee, serving eleven CF and TF Groups, uses the following structure:

1. General Chairperson and two Co-Chairpersons, one for CFs, one for TFs.
2. The General Chairperson, a member of the local CSO steering committee, co-ordinates activity reports to the steering committee. The same structure is applicable to the Area Committee where CF and TF committees are organised on an Area basis.
3. Co-Chairpersons appoint a contact or "outside sponsor" for each Group or meeting. Contacts then become members of the CF or TF committees.

These committees convene every month to make assignments and handle other related business. Occasionally, a dinner, followed by a guest speaker, may be held; all AAs in the Area are invited, as the effectiveness of this work always depends on Group participation. CF and TF administrators and officials and other interested non-AAs are frequently invited.

## **BASIC FUNCTIONS OF A T&CF COMMITTEE**

### **TAKES REGULAR AA MEETINGS IN CFS AND TFS WITHIN ITS AREA.**

1. Encourages Group participation. In some Areas each Group has a Group Institutions Representative (GIR).
2. Provides a liaison between CF and TF Groups and meetings and Groups on the outside.
3. Co-ordinates sponsorship:
  - a) provides individual sponsorship
  - b) provides Group sponsorship.
4. Arranges purchase and distribution of literature for these Groups and meetings. Some Groups collect back issues of the local AA magazine for distribution.

## **RELATIONSHIP WITH CF AND TF AUTHORITIES**

1. Makes information about AA's function and purpose available.
2. Seeks to understand all CF and TF regulations, and explains them to members who will be in direct contact with the Group.
3. Assists in the formation of new Groups in CFs and TFs.

Signing cards validating that a person has attended an AA meeting is at the discretion of individual groups. Doing so does not contravene any Tradition and enhances the principle of co-operation without affiliation.

## MEETINGS & SPEAKERS

In a few Areas, Groups are assigned to provide speakers at specific times in specific facilities. In those Areas where this policy has been implemented, it appears to work well; however, it is not always so - too often commitments are not followed through. The problem is the question of responsibility, which can be allocated:

1. To the contact or Group Sponsor for each facility, who then seeks out individual speakers.
2. To the facility representatives of the outside Groups.
3. To an individual appointed by the chairperson.
4. To the two co-chairpersons of the committee, who arrange for rotation among Groups in the Area. (Note: it is helpful to ask nearby Groups to serve during bad weather (eg snow and ice!), allowing distant Groups to participate when travelling is easier).
5. Committee members assume the total responsibility, rotating the assignments among themselves, while still recruiting other speakers for variety.

NOTE: Experience indicates that while CF and TF Groups and meetings need the support of outside speakers at their meetings, they can and do help themselves by holding closed meetings for which they are responsible. Many committees have found that encouraging this often leads to CF and TF Groups and meetings developing their own AA discussions, which in turn can lead to lessening their dependence on outside Groups. All people responsible for meetings at CFs and TFs concur that the more outside members who participate the better. The patient or inmate then has an opportunity to hear varied AA talks, has a better chance to identify and to hear different interpretations of AA; it is not necessary for the speakers to have been institutionalised or in treatment.

## LITERATURE

Most committees feel that adequate literature supplies are essential in T&CF Groups and meetings. General Service Office has put together a wallet containing a basic set of T&FC materials.

Supplies can be financed in several ways:

1. Donated by local CSO or Group.
2. Donated by individual members of the committee.
3. Special funds, eg: Buck of the Month Club - many members contribute and all funds are used for T&CF literature.
  - a) Special meetings or dinners, at which a collection is taken for T&CF literature.
  - b) Piggy banks or special cans at regular meetings, marked "For T&CF Literature".

## SPONSORSHIP

Experience shows that even though a man or a woman may have been participating in a Group or meeting in a CF or TF, there is anxiety about the transition to a regular Group on the outside. With the constant reminder that AA has only sobriety to offer, many committees do try to provide some additional personal contact, so that this transition period can be made easier.

1. Where there is a local CSO, newly released patients or inmates are encouraged to meet sponsors through its office.
2. Contact with a Group in the area to which the inmate/patient is being discharged is established in advance:
3. Occasionally, in TFs, patients are allowed to attend outside meetings before their release; this makes sponsorship easier. In some instances, this is done instead of having meetings within the treatment centre
4. Pre-parole activity is encouraged in some areas and many committees work closely with parole officers. Sometimes, as with TFs, CF inmates are allowed to attend outside meetings in advance of their parole. Through continual contact with parole officers, the committee can be given vital statistics on all parolees coming into and leaving the area. The parolees are then contacted immediately on arrival and those going elsewhere are given contacts at their destinations through the AA directories.
5. The contact chairperson or Group sponsor meets the patient or inmate on release. (Sponsorship being the personal thing that it is, many Areas have found it helpful to have patients or inmates select their own sponsors once contact with the outside has been made. The initial contacts do not necessarily continue as sponsors, but do serve as a vital link between the institution and the AA Group outside).

## RELATIONSHIP TO AA IN THE AREA OR DISTRICT

As in all AA activity, communication of needs and progress is all important. Such communication can be maintained through:

1. GSRs at CSO or Area meetings
2. The use of CSO/Area bulletins
3. Special institutions bulletins
4. Direct contact at regular meetings by committee members
5. Special dinners with T&CF committees inviting others to attend
6. Regular T&CF workshops under Area service meetings. (In some places inmates are allowed to attend these workshops with their Group advisers);
7. Monthly meetings of the District or other local T&CF committees (rotated within an Area), to which all AAs are invited.

## RELATIONSHIP TO AL-ANON

Many Areas report that it is extremely helpful to work with Al-Anon Family Groups in order that the family of the inmate or patient may gain a better understanding of our Fellowship. For information, contact: Al-Anon Family Groups PO Box 1002H Melbourne VIC 3001.

## RELATIONSHIP TO GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE

As mentioned above, General Service Office has made up small kits of T&CF materials. New materials are produced from time to time, such as a recent equivalent to *"It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell"* for female inmates entitled *"How Did I End Up Here?"*. Currently available titles include:

*"How AA Members Cooperate with Professionals", "If You are a Professional (who works with alcoholics)", "AA in Treatment Facilities", "AA as a Resource for the Health Care Professional" and "Three Talks to Medical Societies by Bill W., Co-founder of AA".*

*"Memo To An Inmate", "AA In Treatment Centres", "AA In Correctional Facilities", "Carrying the Message Inside The Walls", "Where Do I Go From Here?" and "It Sure Beats Sitting In A Cell".*

Also valuable are: *"AA In Your Community", "AA At A Glance", "The AA Member – Medications and Drugs", "Members of the Clergy Ask About Alcoholics Anonymous", .*

There are also a number of videos that are suitable for showing in institutions, for example:

*"It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell", "Rap With Us", "Young People", "Hope".*

*"AA Around Australia"* has a T&CF News sheet. *Loners Internationalists Meeting* (LIM Australia) offers another type of opportunity for Members confined behind the walls. This is an AA meeting by mail, published six times per year. Call or write to General Service Office for details.

If you are just becoming interested in T&CF work, why not enquire from CSO about a list of the CFs and TFs in your Area, or establish one, and check to see whether any Groups are listed in your local hospitals, prisons or rehab centres? If there aren't any, contact the administrators in the institutions; they may be most understanding and co-operative, or they may initially resist the idea of an AA presence, which could require a period of careful relationship-building and persistence.

Please keep in touch with us and let us know of your experience. Send details so we can add any unlisted CFs and TFs committees or Groups to the General Service Office mailing list, and so that we may share your activities through the T&CF Bulletins, add your experiences to our files and help others who want to work with AA in institutions.

## **GUIDELINE GL-17**

### **FOR AA MEMBERS EMPLOYED IN THE ALCOHOLISM FIELD**

#### **WHAT ARE THESE GUIDELINES SUPPOSED TO DO?**

This material is limited strictly to suggestions about life as an AA member. As members of AA we do not presume to give advice about professional matters - there is nothing here about how to do your professional work.

As you will see, the strength and hope shared here stress the value of a strong foundation of recovery in AA for members who take jobs in the field of alcoholism. We hope they will sustain and enhance such a recovery. In addition, the experience passed on here, based on trial-and-error efforts over the years, may help our Fellowship to maintain the favoured position it occupies in most alcoholism circles.

#### **FOR WHOM ARE THESE GUIDELINES INTENDED, SPECIFICALLY?**

These suggestions are for the benefit of any AA members who are employed as professionals or in other paid work in alcoholism programmes or agencies. This includes people in three principle types of non-AA job in the alcoholism world:

1. Direct face-to-face services to alcoholics (such as those given by social workers, counsellors, nurses and physicians);
2. Programme, consultant, administrative, research, planning and educational positions, not necessarily involving actual person-to-person services to alcoholics, and those concerned more with alcoholism and
3. Any combination of the above.

#### **ON WHAT EXPERIENCE IS THIS GUIDELINE BASED?**

These suggestions are based on actual North American in-the-field experience: of scores of AA members who put their experiences in writing for this sharing-session-in-print. They answered in detail a questionnaire that the General Service Office (GSO, US and Canada) sent to them. Their positions range from recent casework on skid row to heading national programmes for many years.

## WHAT KINDS OF AA EXPERIENCE CAN BE HELPFUL IN AN ALCOHOLISM JOB?

1. AA members who answered our questionnaire were agreed that several years of uninterrupted sobriety in AA should be behind you before you tackle any professional job in the field of alcoholism. Five years was mentioned most frequently, but a couple of people said three, but in any case, quality of sobriety was more important than mere quantity on its own.
2. Experience in several AA Groups, not just one, is most valuable, respondents indicated. As well as Group jobs, the kinds of AA service experience recommended include the following: volunteer work in institutions, time as a GSR or CSO representative, or membership of some AA committee.

Some members have held positions as trusted servants in AA and at the same time worked for alcoholism agencies. Experience has proved that an AA who is well-informed about both AA and the professional responsibility can offer valuable service in both roles. The General Service Conference has affirmed that AA members employed in the alcoholism field are eligible for service within the Fellowship provided they have the necessary AA qualifications.

3. Faith, courage and self-discipline were repeatedly emphasised as attributes a member needs on any job in this field. *" . . . and you'll also develop humility, patience, tolerance and good humour to survive in the alcoholism business"*, one member added.

*"Remember," wrote another, "you may be the only AA experience your non-AA colleagues ever have, so you have to be an example of what AA can do."*

4. An understanding of AA Traditions and how they developed out of experience is *"absolutely indispensable"* for AAs employed in the alcoholism field.

One man wrote *"To deepen my understanding, I read the books "Alcoholics Anonymous", "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" and "AA Comes of Age" over and over.*

Traditions mentioned often include

- **Three** - membership requirement;
  - **Five** - primary purpose;
  - **Six** - outside enterprises;
  - **Seven** - self-support;
  - **Ten** - non-endorsement;
  - **Eleven** - public relations.
5. Up-to-date familiarity with developments in AA was recommended by many, *" . . . so that you won't misrepresent AA by mistake or through ignorance . . ."* as one member put it. Mentioned as useful for this purpose were all AA pamphlets, the Guidelines, *"AA Around Australia"* and the annual (confidential) report of the General Service Conference, all available to any AA member.

Especially helpful:

- “The “Australian AA Service Manual””
- “*Twelve Concepts for World Service*”
- “*How AA Members Co-operate*”
- “*AA In Your Community*”
- “*AA and Occupational Alcoholism Programs*”
- “*AA in Treatment Centres*”
- “*AA in Prisons*”
- “*If You Are a Professional*”
- “*Information on Alcoholics Anonymous*”
- “*The Twelve Traditions, Illustrated*”.

6. In the public mind, AA is often confused with various agencies in the alcoholism field; consequently several respondents said it is necessary to know these agencies, what they do, and how they differ from AA. As the names and status of these agencies in Australia are now subject to frequent change, contacts are given below for some national peak or information bodies from whom other details may be requested:

- WA: ADIS: 08 9442 5000; country: 1800 198 024
- NT: Amity Community Services: 08 8981 8030; country: 1800 629 683.
- SA: ADIS: 1300 13 1340
- Qld: ADIS: 07 3326 2414; country: 1800 177 833
- NSW: ADIS (Alcohol & Drug Information Service): 02 9361 8000; country: 1800 422 599
- ACT: Alcohol & Drug Program: 02 6205 4545
- Vic: Direct Line: 03 9416 1818; country: 1800 136 385
- Tas: ADIS: 03 6222 7511 (9am-5pm)
- Australian Drug Information Network (ADIN) <[www.adin.com.au](http://www.adin.com.au)>
- Centre for Education and Information on Drugs and Alcohol <[www.ceida.net.au](http://www.ceida.net.au)>
- Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia <[www.adca.org.au](http://www.adca.org.au)>  
<<http://www.adca.org.au>>
- National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre <[www.med.unsw.edu.au/ndarc](http://www.med.unsw.edu.au/ndarc)>
- Al-Anon Family Groups, GPO Box 1002H, Melbourne 3001.

7. AA contributors to this Guideline agreed overwhelmingly that it is professional skill and experience, not AA membership, which qualifies one for professional positions. Nevertheless, several said that continuing professional education and work have also enriched their AA life. The following experience, qualities and character traits were also acknowledged as being important:

- Lots of *Twelfth Step* experience;
- A good knowledge of AA in the area in which you work - not only of many AA Groups, but also CSOs, committees, clubhouses, etc;
- Ability to be objectively critical of your own performance and motives and

- Some have found it helpful to have a sponsor who does not work in the alcoholism field.

## **PROBLEMS YOU MAY ENCOUNTER IN YOUR AA LIFE WHEN YOU BECOME A PROFESSIONAL IN THE FIELD OF ALCOHOLISM**

At first, and perhaps surprisingly, you may find that other AA members seem to misunderstand your new job. In AA's earlier days, some of our longer-sober members reported that they were accused of 'making money out of AA' when they took jobs in the field of alcoholism and found it hard not to get resentful over that kind of criticism.

AA has grown up a lot since then, but even so, our respondents said regretfully that an AA member in a new alcoholism job may still be a victim of misinformation or lack of information on the part of other members. This is particularly tricky, since you may feel you are being attacked personally when the cause is really a misinterpretation of principles. You may be tempted to 'set matters straight' or 'have it out', which may only make matters worse.

### **WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT:**

*"I feel quite secure in my own heart and mind" one respondent said, "that my job is a good thing and that I deserve getting paid for it, as long as I do not take advantage of AA for personal gain of any sort, or exploit AA to get my job done."*

From another, *"When I'm faced with criticism, I try not to act hastily. I take time to think it through and discuss it, considering the long-term effects not only on myself, but also on other people."*

Another respondent replied, *"Often, what seemed at first to be a good thing to do quickly in my personal interest has turned out to be, on reflection, not the best thing in the long run, either for myself, for the agency employing me or for the Fellowship of AA as a whole."*

And another: *"You are not paid to stay sober, to go to AA meetings, to do the First, Third, Tenth, Twelfth or any other Steps, or to live within the spirit of AA's Traditions. If you do these things on your own, for your own sake, with no pay for doing them, you are not a 'paid' or 'professional' AA member; you are paid for your professional services, not for your AA membership."*

But this is not always clear, especially to newer AA members, who sometimes seem to feel that *"... anyone being paid for doing anything in the field of alcoholism is somehow betraying or compromising AA"*. In one member's words, *"As AA members become better informed, they realise that many agencies offer services for alcoholics which AA does not provide."* and *"... upon reflection, the more mature members realise that for professional services, a professional fee is appropriate."* (See also pp. 115-117 in "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age").

Another respondent said that before taking such a job, she discussed it thoroughly with her AA friends to make sure they understood. Several said that keeping in close touch with other members who have such jobs gives you tips for handling such problems, and provides encouragement and support.

In several places, AA members employed in the field get together regularly for informal sharing on AA problems, plus, of course, experience, strength and hope! Check with your nearest AA CSO or General Service Office. *"Don't let criticism bother you,"* an old-timer wrote. *"just plug ahead doing a good honest job, and keep on being a good AA member on your own time. The static will pass eventually."*



## WHAT IS THE SECRET OF FILLING BOTH ROLES SUCCESSFULLY?

Can you keep it perfectly clear in your own mind whether you are acting right now in your paid (non-AA) job role, or functioning as an AA member?

*"Standing at the hospital bedside of an unconscious alcoholic", one physician in AA explained, "there's no doubt it's my service as a doctor that is called for, not some Twelfth Step talk." But it is not always that easy.*

*One medical social worker wrote, "Talking to clients with alcohol problems, I have to think through very carefully - considering the possible results - whether to blurt out impulsively my own AA story, or cool it and use my influence as a professional caseworker. I ask myself two questions: first, what does this patient need most at this minute? And second, am I boosting my own ego or putting the patient's welfare first?"*

*An member who is an alcoholism counsellor in a hospital wrote: "It's not enough to keep it clear in your own head in which capacity you are acting. Sometimes, in case conferences about patients, I discovered painfully that the 'civilians' on the staff, all of whom know I am in AA, got terribly mixed up about AA because they could not tell when I was speaking as an AA member and when I was playing my impersonal, professional role."*

Many AA members working in the alcoholism field agreed that it is important to explain or symbolise in some way, whenever possible, exactly in which role or context you are behaving. Try to make it clear to both clients and colleagues, so that they do not confuse AA actions with professional behaviour. One way to do this, several programme directors noted, is to be sure that job titles never contain the initials 'AA'. They tell us professional agencies save themselves lots of grief by using the term 'alcoholism counsellor', never 'AA counsellor'. Sticking to one role at a time and clearly demonstrating the difference between your AA actions and your job performance are plainly in the best interests of both the professionals and AA.

## WHAT METHODS CAN BE USED TO KEEP ROLES CLEARLY DISTINCT?

Techniques for keeping roles separate vary widely. At one extreme, there are those who are absolutely unyielding in their refusal to discuss their job with AA members or at an AA meeting (and vice versa). At the other extreme, there are those who talk easily about both in all settings, but always use some simple qualification. For example: *"As an AA member, I feel so and so, but as a professional person, I would recommend such and such . . ."* Several members wrote: *"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 majority of our respondents seemed to feel that what is needed most is quiet common sense: keep it simple, approach each situation on its own merits, be sure you are deeply acquainted with AA Traditions and their application and watch your language carefully.

## WHAT OTHER TRAPS CAN JOBS IN ALCOHOLISM SET FOR MEMBERS?

1. Recurring ego inflation, especially if you begin to see good results on your job. *"Humility and gratitude are not only more becoming; they are also much safer, more in line with AA teachings, and far more helpful in my own growth", one member summarised.*

*Another wrote, "Try never to feel or sound like an expert on AA either at your AA*

*Group or on your job. And try to avoid thinking or acting like an expert on alcoholism either at AA meetings or in professional non-AA circles."*

2. Failure to give credit where due, especially to non-AA professionals who perform services for alcoholics, is also an easy mistake to make. *"Everyone deserves and needs sincere appreciation. I have found that being liberal with praise - just a decent human courtesy - helps foster a climate of friendliness and co-operation."*
3. Getting impatient and critical of the ideas, practices and attitudes of non-AAs whose ideas are different from your own is a danger respondents warned about. *"It does absolutely no good, makes your own job harder and creates enemies for AA"* wrote the assistant director of a large institute, *"Curb your eager-beaver impulses to keep ramming AA down everybody's throat. Never get trapped into arguments about AA, and avoid the inclination to try to defend, explain, or interpret AA. The Fellowship's results speak eloquently for themselves. Clam up and let them"* he said. *"Try not to brag about AA, make outlandish claims about its success, or describe it as the only or whole answer to alcoholism."*

If and when your non-AA colleagues do express any interest, take them or encourage them to go to AA meetings, or offer them one simple pamphlet such as *"If You Are a Professional . . ."* or *"A Member's Eye View of AA"*.

## WHAT ABOUT FUND RAISING AND RESEARCH?

Experience has shown that these two subjects can cause misunderstanding between AA and the professional world; such problems can easily be solved, if not avoided.

### 1. **Fund Raising:**

If the names of widely-known AA members appear in connection with fund appeals, this can be and sometimes is misinterpreted to mean that AA itself is seeking donations, or that AA endorses the organisation asking for money. Therefore, there is some feeling that AA members' names should never be used in fund raising or in any way that might imply AA endorsement of or affiliation with any programme or organisation.

According to Tradition Seven, no AA office or Group accepts money or gifts from non-AA sources. In accordance with Traditions Six and Ten, AA is not allied with and does not endorse or oppose any other organisation or programme.

Members who understand the principles behind these Traditions can prevent many troubles. See pp 155-156 and 176-179 in *"Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions"* (Traditions Six and Ten), and pp 107-114 and other sections in *"AA Comes of Age"*.

### 2. **Research:**

When a professional agency wants to use AA members in research projects, it can be ticklish. Some AA members are not interested in alcoholism research and some even fear that such research could publicise their AA membership. Some professional agencies do not yet understand AA's primary purpose, or that no AA office, Group or any other unit can require AA members to do anything!

Nonetheless, a number of worthwhile research projects involving AA members as private citizens have been accomplished when properly prepared. See Guideline GL-24: *"Co-Operation in Research & Non-AA Survey Projects"*.

## WHAT ABOUT ANONYMITY?

Saying "I am in AA" or otherwise revealing your AA membership, or using your full name and/or an identifiable photo, is a violation of *Tradition Eleven* only when it is done at the level of press, TV, radio, films or other public media. None of our respondents even remotely favoured changing this Tradition in any way. No one even hinted that it is ever all right to violate it under any circumstance. The values of this Tradition for individual recovery, as well as protection of our Fellowship, are clearly spelled out in "*AA Comes of Age*", "*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*" and the pamphlets "*The AA Tradition - How It Developed*" and "*Understanding Anonymity*".

No respondent questioned our ethical responsibility never to reveal the AA membership or alcoholism of any other member, just as no one questions the privileged, confidential nature of the doctor-patient, lawyer-client, priest-parishioner relationships. As you know, AA publications, offices, Groups and committees make every effort not to reveal in any way the identity of other AA members. Some workers in the field feel special efforts are necessary to make sure they never slip up and inadvertently reveal the name of anyone in AA to anyone else, ever.

Whether or not you disclose your own AA membership is your own affair, and if you do, it does not violate the *Eleventh Tradition* as long as you do not do it in the public media. It has always been left strictly up to the individual to decide whether or not to tell family, friends, employer or colleagues, whether in private conversations, in speaking engagements or when trying to help an alcoholic into AA. It still is.

No Tradition covers this kind of personal communication explicitly. In fact, the *Fifth*, *Ninth* and *Twelfth Steps* specifically suggest that we do tell people how we are trying to help ourselves recover. Such private revelations are built into our recovery programme. Every one of us, when we first approach AA, is twelfth-stepped by someone who tells honestly and openly of his or her own alcoholism and recovery in AA. No AA Tradition or custom has ever suggested that it is good for members to hide their illness or keep secret their recovery from it. We are not ashamed of being recovering alcoholics. Even to say, simply "I am a recovering alcoholic" publicly in print, on TV or anywhere else, is not a break of any AA Tradition as long as AA membership is not broadcast or published; most respondents understand the difference. (The principles underlying *Tradition Eleven* are explained in the pamphlet "*Understanding Anonymity*".)

So, although it is perfectly okay to say "I am a recovering alcoholic" or to reveal AA membership *on a personal basis*, we found a wide range of thoughtful opinion on when and where it is acceptable to do either of these in other than one-to-one situations. Some respondents said they often identify themselves simply as "recovering alcoholics", because this may help chip away at the stigma surrounding alcoholism and in the long run may contribute to changing the stereotype of the alcoholic and attitudes toward alcoholics.

On the other hand, other respondents pointed out a disadvantage. They said if it is known you are a former victim of active alcoholism, you are immediately viewed in some circles as a 'special pleader with a vested interest', and this may lessen your influence as a supposedly objective, professional person. Apart from strict adherence to *Tradition Eleven* and to a policy of never revealing either the alcoholism or the AA membership of anyone else, to set up a rigid policy for yourself and never deviate from it no matter what the circumstances was not recommended.

## MISCELLANEOUS SUGGESTIONS

From the wealth of good experience shared with us, we've also culled a few miscellaneous tips you might find helpful:

1. Remember that your basic training in alcoholism is subjective, personal experience. Non-AAs naturally have to see the illness objectively, from other, outer directions, not from the inside. This does not necessarily mean one view is better than the other, simply that they are different, but both can be true, good and helpful to the sick alcoholic.
2. Be sure to maintain, outside or in addition to your job, a personal AA life of your own.
3. Go regularly to AA meetings, not as a guest expert or big shot, but as a listening 'newcomer' trying to stay sober.
4. Never be afraid to say you are wrong, you're sorry, you don't know, you goofed or you need help.
5. If your job threatens your sobriety, by all means get out of it. The alcoholism business is not the right vocation for everybody, in AA or out of it. And no job is as important as your sobriety.
6. If you speak as an AA member, be sure to emphasise that you speak only for yourself, since no AA member can speak for or represent AA as a whole.
7. **NOTE:** Some AA members prefer the term 'recovering alcoholic' rather than 'recovered alcoholic'. Within AA, it is probably clear that the former term means we are always trying to get better, but it is doubtful if non-AAs appreciate this fine distinction, so the term *recovered alcoholic* is probably less confusing to the public.

## WHAT HAS AA HISTORY SHOWN ABOUT AAs IN ALCOHOLISM JOBS?

For more than half a century AA members have been working professionally in the field of alcoholism. Our co-founder Dr Bob S, in addition to his personal AA twelfth-stepping, also treated alcoholics in his professional capacity as a physician. In 1944 Marty M. pioneered educating the public about alcoholism. She had the full support of Dr Bob, Bill W & other early AA members. They saw then that the organising and fund raising necessary for public education on alcoholism were outside AA's ability and primary purpose. In 1957, as Bill W. pointed out in "[AA Comes of Age](#)", many AAs were already successfully employed to work on alcoholism problems by non-AA organisations in such capacities as social workers, researchers, educators, nurses, personnel advisers, rehab farm managers and many others.

Looking back, we can clearly see how that it would be unreasonable and futile to try to prevent AA members from using any professional skills they have in institutions and programmes concerned with alcoholism. Many AAs have made remarkable professional contributions to the world's knowledge and understanding of alcoholism while acting fully within both the letter and spirit of the AA Traditions. It can be done; it has been done.

Many professional men and women in AA, in addition to carrying the AA message of recovery freely to other alcoholics, have used their non-AA expertise to help alcoholism agencies and facilities perform for alcoholics many of the vital services which AA cannot and does not offer.

They function as psychiatrists, fund raisers, psychologists, corrections officers, jurists and counsellors and as such give medical and legal aid, feed, clothe, shelter, perform research, provide vocational aid, public education, community organisation, etc. *"We see that we have no right or need to discourage AAs who wish to work as individuals in these wider fields"*, according to Bill W (*"AA Comes of Age"* - p117), *"It would be actually antisocial were we to discourage them."* He once advised some professionally-employed AAs to remember that many professionals are much newer in the alcoholism field than we are and our experience can be of great value to them if we share it with modesty and humility.



## GUIDELINE NO GL-18

## **CARRYING THE AA MESSAGE TO THE HEARING-IMPAIRED ALCOHOLIC**

In response to many inquiries regarding help for hearing-impaired alcoholics and because of the limited information on hand at GSO New York, two separate surveys of the North American AA membership were undertaken. The first, in 1978, was directed to AA service entities and those deaf Groups already listed at GSO New York; the second was conducted by way of Box 459 in 1982. GSO also wrote to more than 3,500 individual professionals and agencies that serve hearing-impaired people seeking information on what AA could do to improve its ability to carry its message of help and hope to alcoholics in the deaf community. The response was excellent, indicating real need in this area. Several agencies requested local AAs to provide public information meetings about the Fellowship for their people.

If this is your first experience with deafness and sign language interpreters, you may want to educate yourself a bit beforehand. Australian Hearing Services and similar organisations can offer you information on deafness, deaf culture and information about sign language, but there is no need for you to take a crash course in sign language! Of course, if you do learn some signs or finger spelling (manual alphabet), it will surely be useful. In Australia there is no national Society for the Deaf; however, each State has a Deaf Society association - please check your local telephone directory.

## **CARRYING THE MESSAGE TO DEAF ALCOHOLICS**

The main thing to remember is that the deaf have the same problem with alcohol as anyone else. While the deaf come up with a thousand reasons why they are different, let's emphasise over and over "Don't drink; keep coming back". When all else fails, they do come back. Often, everything must be written out for those with impaired hearing and not all are great readers and writers. Let's hope that a smile, a handshake and a cup of coffee can carry 'the language of the heart', even to those minus their hearing. Try to encourage the newcomer to take some AA literature and summarise what the speaker said on a note pad. Encourage the newcomer to come to another meeting and try to work out a way for the deaf person to bring a professional interpreter who uses sign language with him, or contact one yourself at a nearby agency.

## **INTERPRETERS**

An interpreter is essential for the hearing-impaired alcoholic: without one there is no communication. As the situation is now, interpreters are a *must*. Care must be taken, however, that the deaf person does not become so dependent on the interpreter that there is little or no interaction with other members. It is sometimes (often?) difficult to convey feelings through another person.

It must be appreciated that hearing-impaired people have varying degrees of language skill which differ depending upon their age when they became deaf. Most deaf people use sign language, but there are various levels of competence; there are also different types of sign language, not to mention regional dialects. Interpreters are professional people who charge fees for their services; sometimes an agency will take care of the expense and we have heard of a Group that covers this expense. On occasion, CSOs have authorised payment for interpreters and sometimes students of sign language will do the job for free to gain the experience.

Whatever arrangements are made, they should be based on the Group's conscience, expressed after discussion at a business meeting. For instance, is the Group agreeable to having a non-AA attend its closed meetings to act as interpreter for the deaf alcoholic? Is the Group willing to cover the expense of this service, or does it wish to appoint someone to contact the CSO or the professional agency about providing an interpreter? In order to welcome the deaf person (and the interpreter) and make the newcomer feel that he or she is an important addition to the Group, it is important that a full understanding be reached in advance. Non-alcoholic interpreters should be introduced to the Group before meetings. In America there is an organisation of interpreters known as Registry of Interpreters (RID); it should not be difficult to discover if there is an equivalent in your Australian Region, and if there is, to contact them.

## SHARED EXPERIENCE

"The wife of an AA member who is a member of Al-Anon is excellent with sign language. Several deaf members attend both open and closed meetings with her and she interprets for them. The Groups took a 'sense of the meeting' and agreed to her attending closed meetings for the purpose of helping deaf alcoholic."

"The TDD phone at GSO rang with our first *Twelfth Step* call. Marilyn S, just out of treatment, was eager to attend AA meetings, as recommended, but was unable to find any with an interpreter present. Our letter of enquiry brought forth encouraging news:

1. That the office had just arranged for interpreters at two weekly meetings;
2. Its newsletter had asked for members who would be willing to 'sign' their own home Group meetings when needed;
3. A list of deaf members willing to *Twelfth-Step* deaf newcomers was being compiled and
4. Marilyn herself was hard at work setting up an AA meeting for deaf alcoholics at a local hospital."

"Encourage Group members to write to deaf alcoholics as often as possible and refer the deaf newcomer to our deaf correspondents."

"Dealing with deaf alcoholics has been very similar to dealing with hearing alcoholics, and the support of the AA community is most important."

"Try not to treat the deaf alcoholic as different or special. Allow him or her the best possible freedom to fit into a typical AA meeting."

## SIGN LANGUAGE

Unfortunately, sign language differs between countries, so video materials produced for one country are useless for another. GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE holds and can provide copies of one video explaining the *Fifth Step* in the New Zealand deaf signage. At this time a video is being prepared in *Auslan*, the Australian system and has been approved for distribution when completed.

A few dedicated North American AA members have learned sign language in order to be more effective in this *Twelfth Step* work. Here are some comments:

"As a result of trying to communicate with deaf alcoholics, I am taking a course in sign language."



"Learning this skill for a hearing person necessitates being with the deaf often. Expecting a hearing person to give himself often to the deaf community is expecting the heroic. When I say often, I mean like constantly."

"As two of us go on *Twelfth Step* calls, it isn't necessary that both use sign language; one talks, the other interprets." CSO newsletters could be encouraged to publish information about Groups or contacts for the deaf and availability of instruction in sign language for anyone interested in learning.

## SHARING BY MAIL

Deaf alcoholics can be included in the *Loners Internationalists Meeting Australia* (LIM Australia), an AA meeting by mail, published four times per year. Also, General Service Office will on their behalf, call all known local resources, including CSOs, to find assistance for deaf Members or Groups if they call for help.

## AA LITERATURE & OTHER MATERIALS

See the notes above under "*Sign Language*" and the NZ video: "*The Fifth Step Explained*". Call GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE {(02) 9599 8866} if this could be of help to you.

In response to our survey question on AA literature, those items cited as most helpful with the hearing-impaired were:

- "Living Sober"
- "*Is AA for You?*"
- "*AA at a Glance*"
- "*Twelve Traditions Illustrated*"
- "Alcoholics Anonymous"
- "The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions".

In response to many requests for simplified material, the following service pieces are available from New York in easier English and large type, which may be ordered from General Service Office:

- "*Twelve Steps*"
- "*A Brief Guide to AA*"
- "*A Newcomer Asks*".

## PI & CPC COMMITTEES:

Based on the fine response GSO New York received from the professional agencies contacted, local PI & CPC committees are encouraged to seek out agencies for the hard-of-hearing (often included in local agencies for the handicapped), and offer to put on an open AA meeting or a *Public Information* meeting about Alcoholics Anonymous. Should you have the opportunity to do this, General Service Office will be glad to advise on material to display and distribute. Another project that has been suggested for PI committees is to take an AA meeting to schools for the deaf and/or provide information and material about AA to such schools. Apparently, there are a number of social clubs for the deaf, and there are likely to be some alcoholics among the members. At the very least, some club members may know of deaf alcoholics. If we can make information available about what AA can offer the hearing-impaired, the attitude toward attending AA meetings could become much more positive. Contacts for local deaf institutions and clubs may be found in the telephone directory under 'Hearing Impaired ...' or 'Deaf ...'.

## EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

AAs with impaired hearing may need a few special considerations when attending an AA event. For those who have a fair amount of hearing and/or who can lip-read, seating near the speaker may be all that is required. 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 hearing-impaired AAs:

- Reserve interpreters well ahead of time because they are in great demand;
- 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 strike lucky and find a qualified volunteer, but don't count on it;
- In arranging preferred seating for hearing-impaired members, designate the reserved area clearly: "Reserved for hearing-impaired members";
- Advise workshop leaders and meeting chairpersons regarding the use of the interpreter. If there is trouble locating an interpreter for a minute or two it is preferable to wait. In this way, those members who depend on the interpreter will not be deprived of opening remarks or keynote speakers.
- Stick with your plans once you have announced that an event is provided with sign-language interpreters. Hearing-impaired people are very likely to travel far for the few events that are interpreted. If the event is a large one with concurrent meetings and workshops, plan for continuous availability of several interpreters;
- If you are listing the event with General Service Office, your local CSO or Area or in any AA publication, specify that it is, or which parts of it are, sign-language interpreted.

## CONCLUSION

We encourage you to keep us informed of your experience in trying to carry the message to deaf alcoholics so that we can continue to improve our services in this field. If General Service Office is aware of stable special interest Groups for the hearing-impaired, we will contact you when we receive requests for help from deaf alcoholics in your community. We look forward to hearing from you and wish you good luck in carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

## FORMING LOCAL COMMITTEES ON CO-OPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

By action of the General Service Board (GSB – North America), January 1970, the Trustees' Committee on Co-operation with the Professional Community (CPC), a spin-off from the Public Information Committee (PIC), was developed; a similar Conference committee was formed the following year. Since that time, AA members have been responding to local needs by establishing CPC committees. In North America, AA is apparently considered by professional persons, almost without exception, to be the number one resource for alcoholics who want help. When there is a good working relationship between AA members in the community and paid alcoholism workers, the professionals give AA credit, AA members return the compliment, and the sick alcoholics are the winners - they get the help needed from both.

AA is not in the business of education, research, medicine, counselling, treatment, prevention or funding. We are not in competition with the non-alcoholic professionals, and neither do they compete with us: we each have our separate functions. We simply have a message to carry about a programme of recovery for alcoholics - a programme that works for **those who want it**. The professionals help the alcoholic by education, medicine, counselling and rehabilitation; they also help by making the community more aware of the progressive illness that AA has helped us arrest.

In a survey of AA membership, more than one third of those surveyed credited a member of the professional community with getting them to our Fellowship. With increasing activity in the alcoholism field and with more people becoming involved in it, some of them having little or no understanding of AA, open communication in a spirit of co-operation, is more important than ever. It is our hope that this Guideline will help to define the scope and function of CPC committees and will facilitate their organisation. It is suggested that where there are existing public information and institutions committees, members from these committees be invited to take part in the formation and function of a new CPC committee.

### SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF PI, CPC AND INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEES:

The following descriptions of the responsibilities of these committees are given for purposes of clarification:

#### **Public information (PI):**

In PI work we are primarily concerned with attraction rather than promotion. The object of PI is to carry the AA message to the general public through the media and to alcoholics through those who are in a position to help them, eg spouse, doctor, friend etc. Members of PI committees visit schools and talk to students about AA CPC and provide information about AA to those who have contact with alcoholics through their professions.

These categories include physicians, nurses, clergy, lawyers, social workers, union leaders and industrial managers, as well as those working in the field of alcoholism. Information is provided about where we are, what we are, what we try to do and what we do not try to do. An attempt is made to establish good co-operation between AA and these members of the professional community.

### **Co-operation with the professional community:**

In this facet of our dealings with the professional community, we want to find efficient and productive ways of effecting co-operation without affiliation. The experience of many AAs active on CPC committees indicates that co-operation takes many forms, such as:

- Individual AA members informing their own physicians about AA;
- Making initial contacts with members of the professional community;
- Taking professionals to open AA meetings;
- Distributing literature.

### **Institutions:**

The purpose of an *Institutions Committee* is to co-ordinate the work of individual AA members and Groups who are interested in carrying our message of recovery to alcoholics in hospitals, treatment and rehabilitation centres and correctional facilities. In many areas of USA-Canada, where CPC committees have been formed at the state or provincial level, liaisons have been established among three committees, viz: one member of the institutions committee and one member of the PI committee are liaison members of the CPC committee; a PI committee member and a CPC committee member serve on the institutions committee; CPC and institutions committee members serve on the PI committee.

It is obvious that there are many instances of overlapping responsibilities. However, it should be clearly established that AA committees are not in competition with each other - local circumstances will determine who does what. In keeping with our tradition of placing principles before personalities, who or what committee carries the AA message is not important *as long as our message is carried*.

Whatever the form, what it comes down to is one alcoholic carrying the message to another, whether through personal contact or third parties or through professionals.

## **GETTING STARTED**

In many areas, CPC committees were organised as follows:

1. State (probably AA Region or Area in Australia) CPC chairperson and co-chairperson were elected by the State committee;
2. District CPC chairperson and co-chairperson were elected in each District;
3. The PI, institutions and CPC committees each assigned a member to attend meetings of the other two committees, thus maintaining communication within AA;
4. A budget figure from State (Area here – Regions do not manage funds) committee funds to get started was approved;

5. A monthly meeting of CPC was planned, at which the above-mentioned PI and institutions committee representatives were among the voting members. Any interested AA member was welcome and invited to attend all meetings. It was suggested that a basic text for CPC committee members should be the pamphlet *"How AA Members Co-operate With Other Community Efforts to help Alcoholics"*. This pamphlet records much AA experience on how AA members can successfully co-operate with everyone while affiliating with no-one.

District chairpersons were requested to report to GSRs about the formation of the committee and its scope and function, so that information about CPC activity would be readily available at the Group level. It was preferred that the CPC committee activities should grow slowly and steadily. It was also proposed that each District discover and list what local resources are available to the alcoholic, the present relationship of each with AA and if it could be improved and in general, provide helpful information for individual committee members. Once this list of professionals, both individuals and organisations, has been compiled, members of the CPC committee can then:

1. Make an initial contact (letter, phone, face-to-face);
2. Offer to come and talk about AA to the interested professional, sharing what AA can and cannot do;
3. Offer to take the professional to an open AA meeting in the area;
4. Provide AA literature describing the AA programme of recovery;
5. Stress AA's eagerness to serve as a community resource to help the alcoholic recover from alcoholism
6. Share the information with the local CSO as a resource/database.

There are several different ways of organising a CPC committee and local needs will guide your choice. Whether you work primarily through the Area and District service structure, through the local CSO or through the Groups, it is better to be organised. If you aren't, problems of communication, duplication of effort and outright confusion will undoubtedly arise.

## CPC IN ACTION:

A Delegate described the formation of an Area CPC committee in the following manner:

"We now have some six or seven local CPC committees. They were either appointed or elected by the District Committee or the Central Service Council (CSC), whichever local procedure was appropriate in such matters. In my District, the CSC chairperson appointed the committee, selecting as chairperson a local business executive who had been introduced to AA through a professional. Consequently, that chairperson was fully aware of how important it is for professionals to understand AA and for AA to co-operate with them. CPC representatives from local communities got together at our Area Assembly, and that was in effect the formation of an Area Committee on *Co-operation With the Professional Community*. It now meets before the regular Assembly, just as our *Institutions* and *Public Information* Committees do and the minutes of those meetings are included with the secretary's report. Thus GSRs can keep their Groups informed of what is going on in the Area. The local chairpersons submit their reports at District meetings. And so we are moving, I think, in the right direction. Let me illustrate how it is already working. In one town there is a Regional Council on alcoholism and one of the physicians on the Council had a reputation for being anti-AA.

When she heard of the local Committee on CPC she invited its members, as private citizens, to participate in some of the Council's planning sessions. After reading the pamphlet *"About AA"*, she asked to be added to the mailing list for our newsletter. It became apparent that she was really not anti-AA, but had been discouraged some time ago by an AA member speaking only for himself.

In another District, our chairperson has launched a series of AA meetings, in which he has a public agency or professional non-alcoholic speaker and an AA speaker who tells his or her story and a little of how AA works. This gives the non-alcoholic speaker a chance to observe briefly how our recovery programme works and, too, it gives us the chance to learn how others are trying to cope with this complex disease. Our work, we realise, has just begun. In time to come, I am sure that this committee will be another instrument for helping AA grow and prosper, along with our Institutions and Public Information Committees".

In essence, CPC committee members, because they have made it their business to become well informed about AA, its history, and its traditional good relationships with the professional community, are able to give an accurate and positive impression of AA and to convey an attitude of co-operation.

## GUIDELINE NO GL-20

### USE OF AA'S TRADEMARKS AND LOGOS

The following is a complete list of registered trademarks and service marks which symbolise Alcoholics Anonymous, its work and purpose:

#### #1 THE WRITTEN WORDS: "ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS"

#### #2 TRADEMARK LOGO:



#### #3 CONFERENCE – APPROVED LITERATURE TRADEMARK:



Use of these marks on goods or services which do not emanate from AA and have not been approved by AA both *"infringes upon and dilutes the AA marks"*, to put it in legal terms. The resulting harm is that the marks, and AA itself, since AA is what the marks symbolise, will come to be associated with a variety of products and services which are not part of AA and which are not consistent with our purpose.

This will cause the marks to lose their meaning and significance as a symbol of AA, eventually placing them in the public domain for anyone to use on anything they please. Use of the AA marks within the Fellowship on novelty items or trinkets is just as harmful, in this legal sense, as use by entities engaged in the business of selling medallions, jewellery, bumper stickers and the like.

Equally important, these novelty items have little to do with AA's primary purpose. We should hold our trademarks in high esteem, and use them only in a manner which reflects the seriousness of our purpose.

Accordingly, it is permissible for AA Groups and service entities to use the mark #2, as shown above, on newsletters, bulletins, and letterheads, and in connection with locally published literature which is produced in support of AA's Legacies of Unity, Service, and/or Recovery.

**Only the General Service Conference may use logo #3**, when identifying Conference-Approved literature. Casual use of this logo on items like coffee mugs, medallions, chips, jewellery, trinkets and bumper stickers and the like, or changes and/or stylisation of the designs which appear above, even when used in an otherwise permissible fashion, *infringes and dilutes the marks* and could eventually destroy them.

The Logo #2 needs always to have the Registration Mark following it.

The words "Alcoholics Anonymous" do not require the Registration Mark following it in text as it is difficult to see which word or words are actually registered.

When using the words *"Alcoholics Anonymous"* in text, at the bottom of the text the following words should be inserted:

"The words 'Alcoholics Anonymous' are a registered Trade Mark of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Australia."

The words *"Alcoholics Anonymous"* and the Logos in the text above are all registered Trade Marks of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Australia.

See also Section 11 of the Australian General Service Manual: "AA Literature".



## GUIDELINE NO GL-21

## AA AND INDUSTRY

This Guideline is based on the pamphlets "*Alcoholism is a Management Problem*" and "*AA and the Alcoholic Employee*" and is published to help members avoid difficult situations which could arise when requests for help reach individual members of the Fellowship from industry. More and more business concerns, from large industrial groups to small private enterprises, are beginning to recognise that the problem of alcoholism can and frequently does affect some of their employees. Indeed, some companies, particularly the larger ones, have already set up formal programmes to help those of their employees who may have a drinking problem.

*Tradition Six* says "An AA Group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose."

## PERSONAL ANONYMITY

Perhaps one of the questions most frequently asked by newer members at Group meetings is "Should I tell my employer that I am an alcoholic?" Clearly, the answer to this must rest with the individual, but it is likely to be influenced by whether or not the employer in question is enlightened on the subject of alcoholism. Where a member is reasonably confident that his employer is sympathetic towards the problem and has decided to disclose that he is an alcoholic, it is suggested that he should also tell his employer that Alcoholics Anonymous is willing to offer help to any employee who may have a problem with drink.

## PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

Because of the complexity of the circumstances which can arise when members find themselves becoming involved in this field, we should be aware of the dangers to our security and sobriety unless we tread carefully. The employer should be told that Alcoholics Anonymous has no financial interest in recruiting members; that there are no dues or fees; that outside contributions will be declined.

The sole concern of AA is the personal recovery and continued sobriety of those who turn to it for help with their drinking problems. The Fellowship is committed to remaining forever non-professional and the AA approach is essentially based on the unique ability of recovering alcoholics to work effectively with other problem drinkers. This approach is already being used productively in many company programmes to combat alcoholism. In an enlightened industry there is generally no harm in *Twelfth-Stepping* a fellow employee who is seeking help, but usually it is better for an AA member to refer a problem drinker to another AA member who does not work for the same company.

Whether the contact takes place during working hours or not depends very largely on how the request for help arose in the first instance. It is generally better to undertake a *Twelfth-Step* contact outside business hours unless the introduction was made with knowledge and approval of management.

If the help proffered is declined by the problem drinker, members should be aware that there is always a possibility that they may be judged adversely by management because of their inability to help the suffering employee.

## COOPERATION WITH INDUSTRIAL PROGRAMMES

If members are asked to co-operate in an industrial programme, or if they are trying to interest the management of a company in such a programme, experience suggests that AA can help in four specific ways:

1. By making available to management, industrial medical directors and personnel management the cumulative experience of several million recovering alcoholics; that is, by putting them in direct contact with men and women who have achieved sobriety in AA and who are willing to share their personal experience freely with any problem drinker who seeks help;
2. By putting employers in touch with other organisations which have had experience in alcoholism programmes using AA methods;
3. By welcoming into a local Group the employee who wants to do something about his drinking problem, where he will find the environment and the friends to help him achieve sobriety.

## AA NEITHER PLANS NOR SETS UP ALCOHOLISM PROGRAMMES

However a member becomes involved in offering the assistance of AA at his place of work, it is important to establish at the very outset that AA does not plan or set up alcoholism programmes for industry. There are already well-known and competent bodies which can be found by consulting your CSO, your telephone directory or one of the following:

WA: *ADIS*: 08 9442 5000; country: 1800 198 024

NT: *Amity Community Services*: 08 8981 8030; country: 1800 629 683.

SA: *ADIS*: 1300 13 1340

Qld: *ADIS*: 07 3326 2414; country: 1800 177 833

NSW: *ADIS* (Alcohol & Drug Information Service): 02 9361 8000; country: 1800 422 599

ACT: *Alcohol & Drug Program*: 02 6205 4545

Vic: *Direct Line*: 03 9416 1818; country: 1800 136 385

Tas: *ADIS*: 03 6222 7511 (9am-5pm).

Many AA members are active in the work of these bodies and those they represent, and it is often they who have aroused the interest of firms in an alcoholism programme. Nevertheless, AA should always be presented only as a community resource which is available for the employee with a drinking problem.

## SMALL COMPANIES

In smaller companies, where there may be no formal programme for dealing with problem drinkers, arrangements are often made informally between the management and AA members employed by the company. In these cases employees with a drinking problem are usually referred, if willing, directly to the AA member for discussion.

## LARGE COMPANIES

In larger companies which have formal programmes for problem drinkers, one employee may be given the job of acting as a counsellor for alcoholic employees and he may well be an AA member who has had the necessary training to qualify him for such a job; such a counsellor generally works closely with the medical department. This kind of work constitutes professional activity and is therefore not Twelfth-Step work.

## AA GROUPS

Companies which have formal programmes for problem drinkers may sponsor the formation of an AA Group. Experience suggests that an AA Group is most successful when the non-alcoholics who have co-operated limit their sponsorship to making facilities available for the Group meetings. Meetings held on company premises, whether in company time or not, are within the Traditions of AA provided that no strings are attached.

AA Groups within a company, made up entirely of employees of that particular company, can be helpful in introducing the AA programme to the problem drinker. **Experience has indicated, though, that the 'employee only' Group is not totally successful unless the newcomer is encouraged to participate in activities of a regular AA Group as well.**

Where a company employs a recovering alcoholic as a counsellor, an AA Group can usually be set up without difficulty, following traditional AA procedures. In such cases it is well for the counsellor to take his place as a member of the Group. Where there is no recovering alcoholic on the company's staff, an outside AA Group may be invited to assist in forming and sponsoring a Group made up of company employees. In most areas the local AA Groups should be able to handle all referrals from a company which would make 'employee only' Groups unnecessary.

## LOCAL AA SUPPORT

Before any approach to a firm is made, however, it is essential to ensure that there is enough local AA support to back up the project. The Area PI Committee should supply the necessary information to industry in that locality; alternatively, a small committee may be formed to keep lines of communication open between Groups so that the collective Group Conscience is always at work.

AA members who are interested in this type of activity may, after consultation with Area PI Committee, make themselves known to the managements of local firms and can explain the ways in which AA co-operates and how AA works. Information can also be given as to how and where AA can be reached. Experience has shown that any undertaking of this kind is most effective when it is the shared responsibility of a number of members supported by the approval of Area PI Committee.

## TO SUMMARISE

Nowadays, progressive employers are becoming increasingly aware of the high cost of alcoholism in industry. They are also beginning to appreciate the substantial benefits of planned procedures to cope with alcoholic employees in the workplace. AA as a whole must keep abreast with what is being done to counter alcoholism by industries with well-established programmes. Some individual members of AA are already aware of programmes for recovery that have been used by many companies in their approach to the problem drinker and recognise that very much remains to be done in this field. They also recognise that many other agencies, both public and private, are making substantial contributions in the long struggle against a most serious public health problem.

The results that have been achieved so far indicate that there is much more still to be achieved. No-one can be more sensitive to this great challenge than AA members, many of whom are finding that carrying the message to business establishments is a very rewarding and productive way of extending the hand of AA to other alcoholics in need of hope and help.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR MEMBERS WISHING TO VISIT CORRECTION CENTRES

### Why Do AA Members go into Correctional Centres ?

**One of the purposes of imprisonment is to afford inmates an opportunity to 'correct' their illegal behaviour. By addressing any underlying problem of alcoholism, Alcoholics Anonymous has sustained a record for over seventy-five years as an effective option for many inmates to turn their lives around.**

For members of AA, visiting sick alcoholics where they are has long been one of the important and happiest ways of keeping ourselves sober. The book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, includes a chapter on 'Working with Others' which states: *"Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail."* Later in the chapter it concludes that *"Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery."*

Our AA Fellowship encapsulates this policy in its banner displayed at many AA meetings: *When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there - and for that I am responsible.*

All members have to do in correctional centres is to be channels for the AA message. Everyone has a story to share in correctional centres because inmates are as varied as AA members; you don't have to have been in gaol yourself. As our book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, says: *"Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful."*

Not only are we doing our Twelfth Step and making ourselves useful in recovery (as the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* talks about), it also gives us that 'sense of belonging' we often lack as practicing alcoholics. It also lets sober alcoholics see what could happen to them if they drink again. However, most important of all, it's the change we witness in inmates that motivates us to carry the AA message.

### HOW TO VOLUNTEER:

Members have sometimes found service in correctional centres to be a challenging experience. However, if you believe it would be personally rewarding, firstly, find out when the meetings are held at the correctional centre convenient to your location. If you are available on those days and times, contact the National Correctional Facilities Coordinator through General Service Office at [www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au) or [gso@aa.org.au](mailto:gso@aa.org.au) or 02 9599 8866.

If AA meetings are not held in a correctional centre in your area, the brochure *AA in Correctional Facilities* can guide you towards starting one. The AA members who arrange security clearances for correctional facilities in your State or Territory can also assist.

## SECURITY

While many corrective services officers understand the usefulness of AA meetings for inmates, especially in facilities with a through-care focus, their job is to place primary importance on security and safety. Consequently, the superintendent of a correctional centre sets the terms under which AA visits can be made. In addition, AA visitors are subject to facility rules that apply to every visitor.

To be allowed into a correctional facility, you have to complete official forms and submit them through the AA member or office that coordinates clearance approvals by the correctional services agency in your State or Territory. In some locations, you may have to re-submit your forms and photographs at regular intervals, perhaps every few years. You may also be required to complete a security awareness course on a date set by the prison. You also usually have to sign an agreement about your obligations as a visitor in a correctional centre.

Inmates will not hesitate to complain to authorities if an AA visitor who is supposed to be there to help them fails to meet standards of behaviour or seems to be wasting their time. To protect your sobriety and AA's reputation, AA may withhold your application unless you obviously satisfy most of the following general conditions:

- Some good sobriety (say, a minimum of two continuous years to date)
- Personal experience of alcoholism and Twelve Step recovery
- Broad knowledge of AA and ability to stick to AA's business of recovery
- Dependability, including being known as an active member of a home Group of AA
- A common sense approach learned from being a sponsor
- Experience of doing Twelfth Step calls
- Ability to follow directions
- A long-term commitment to at least one gaol meeting every month.

In addition, the correctional services agency in each jurisdiction sets its own criteria—which can change from time to time - so always make sure you have the latest version. These criteria always require proof of your identity and a criminal record check.

Note that some States do not permit former inmates to visit; in other cases you may apply if you have been out of gaol for an extended period.

If the corrective service agency does grant you a clearance, you will be given an authority which you must present for each visit, usually along with some photo identification such as a driver's licence.

Note that a pass gives no guarantee that you will be permitted entry on any particular occasion.

Finally, the long-standing practice in AA is for at least two members to do Twelfth Step calls together. This equally applies in correctional centres; there is safety in numbers and you will have a witness in case anything should ever happen.

## BANNED ITEMS

As a general rule, it is better to take as little as possible on a visit. However, always take your official pass and photo identification. You may usually also take your car keys and a handkerchief. Best to limit yourself to those items and leave everything else at home or in the car.

However, in some centres you may not be allowed to take in any personal items, including cigarettes, car keys, wallets, purses, or money. (Coins may be permitted in some centres where there are vending machines.) Sometimes there are lockers at the entrance to hold your possessions.

Corrective Services officers will probably not permit you to take in AA cloth banners of the Steps and Traditions for the meeting. Ask if they would permit you to take in A4 paper printouts of the Steps and Traditions to be displayed on a table.

There are penalties for bringing some items into a correctional centre. This varies from location to location, so it is your responsibility to find out what you are permitted to take into the correctional centre, including any local rules that apply at the centre. For example, some items are not even permitted in the facility car park. In general, banned items typically include: guns; knives; mobile phones; cameras; syringes and, often, CDs. (The Caring and Sharing Tape Library can assist with cassette tapes if they are permitted.)

If staff have a reasonable suspicion that you may be carrying contraband you may be asked to remove your outer clothing such as jacket, hat, and shoes and turn out your pockets. You will also have to open bags or other personal belongings and have them tested with a wand for traces of banned substances. You may be scanned head to toe with a scanning device and have to walk through a metal detector. (Surgical implants and body piercing, especially if concealed under clothes, are a security problem you need to consider in advance.) You may also be required to stand still while a dog, specially trained to detect drugs, walks around you.

If you need to take medication into the correctional centre you'll have to declare it to corrective services officers at the front desk. If your medication is prescribed it needs to be in the original package which has your name on it. Diabetic syringes are not permitted.

You should use the toilet prior to a visit. Advise correctional centre staff in advance if a medical condition will require you to use the toilet while you are in a correction centre.

Finally, what was permitted on the last visit is no guarantee that you will be allowed to take something in the next time.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

AA members are guests in correctional facilities and you have to do what you are told—without question. Cooperation with correctional services staff is a pre-requisite for carrying the message to inmates. Your fellow members want to ensure the Fellowship is always welcome so please be polite and respectful to everyone.

AA is a program of attraction: if you are given a clearance, remember that you represent AA to people in that facility; you are being judged as an example of sobriety. Your language, appearance, manners and mood all affect other people's opinions of our Fellowship. We already know that AA works—let our new friends see, hear and talk to a winner and make sure your behaviour brings credit to AA.

You may encounter corrective services officers who think AA is a waste of time. You should not try to impress them, but we need to keep on side by keeping our minds on the alcoholics who still suffer, now and in the future: thoughtless words or actions can instantly undo prolonged efforts to establish AA in a facility.

Here is a checklist of dos and don'ts derived from the experience of those who have visited correctional centres before you:

### DO

- Abide carefully by all the rules of the facility. The reasons for their rules may not seem clear to us, but it is not up to us to question them
- Observe local dress codes to the letter: make sure you are well groomed and dress as though you are proud to be sober: wear clean, neat clothes with joggers or shoes (no sandals or thongs). In some centres, shorts or T-shirts are not permitted
- Be reliable and arrive at the main gate at least 30 minutes before the AA meeting time so staff have time to fetch you and sign you in
- Smoke only in any area provided if you are able to bring in cigarettes and matches (lighters may not be permitted)
- Make sure any undertaking you make is kept
- Let the authorities know on your way out if you have been asked to bring something in.

### DON'T

- Do not take anything in for the inmates apart from printed AA materials. AA cassette tapes may be allowed but CDs are usually not permitted
- Do not take anything out for anyone, no matter what it may be
- Do not wear clothes that resemble inmate uniforms in style or colour



- Do not swear
- Do not give corrective services officers or inmates any reason to be uncomfortable about AA.
- Do not argue about anything with either inmates or staff: disagreement never wins friends
- Do not try to claim special exemptions or privileges or attempt to manipulate the agency into making concessions
- Do not expect correctional services staff to govern themselves by AA's Traditions
- Do not make a commitment unless you personally are going to keep it; excuses do not speak well for AA, but faithfulness and results do
- Do not make claims about our Twelve Steps, but we can speak of their effectiveness for us.

## THE AA MEETING

If possible, put up the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and clichés before the meeting starts and display some AA literature.

## OPENING REMARKS

- Read the AA Preamble. Tell the inmates that AA started in 1934 and there are over 2,000 meetings every week across Australia—which all function just like the ones in gaol.
- Explain that AA's single purpose is to help alcoholics. However, remember that people in custody often have complex histories of addiction and inmates who more fully identify with other Twelve Step programs may be at the AA meeting because it is their only option.
- Read the Anonymity Desk Card.(available from your local CSO). Explain that we remain anonymous in the media so that alcoholics will not be deterred from seeking help because they fear public disclosure.
- Point out that sharing is encouraged but not required.

## SHARING

If you are asked to share, identify as an alcoholic and make it clear that you choose not to drink alcohol or use any mood altering substances that are not prescribed.

The gaol audience is more interested in learning how to stay sober than in hearing how you got drunk. Get to the point that will help them. Without using AA jargon, talk to them in a straightforward way: tell it like it was for you: not what you guess they might like to hear.

Leave them in no doubt that you:

- a) are a fellow alcoholic. Focus on your drinking pattern (rather than specific graphic descriptions); maybe mention the loneliness, hopelessness and fears; or talk about the mental obsession and physical allergy;
- b) came to a turning point; tell how you came to ask for help, referring to Step One; and,
- c) stay sober using AA's program of recovery with the Twelve Steps. Let them know how different

life is thanks to AA and perhaps explain why you are there.

**It is always useful to reinforce these AA suggestions:**

- Stay away from the first drink
- Live one day at a time
- Read the literature such as the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous*; *Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions*; and, *Living Sober*
- Go to meetings regularly and try to put into practice what we learn there
- Get a sponsor who has made some progress in the recovery program
- Join a home Group where you feel a sense of belonging.

At some stage during the meeting, read ‘*How It Works*’ from Chapter 5 of *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

## QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

If there are newcomers or observers, it may be helpful to open the floor at the end of sharing for questions about AA. You can also expect to interrupt the meeting if an inmate asks a question when they hear something they do not understand.

Be ready for basic questions such as:

- How do I do the Steps in gaol?
- **How do I get a sponsor?**
- **Isn't this a waste of time if you're an alcoholic with a history like mine?**
- **Why do I have to give up alcohol completely?**
- Can I contact AA members outside gaol?
- Can we run our own meeting without visitors?
- Will I be welcome in AA meetings when I get out?

Give simple, straightforward answers...but make sure you answer the question. You can say: ‘*I don't know, but I will try to find out.*’ For questions that are not about AA, such as the merits of other recovery options, it is best to say that AA has no opinion.

In preparing ourselves for possible questions, it helps to be clear in our minds what AA represents to inmates (or corrective services officers). Some possible answers are attached to this Guideline about what AA is trying to achieve in a correctional facility...and what it does not do. You may wish to read out these answers about AA to the inmates, or hand out a printed copy.

## AFTER THE MEETING

Thank everyone, including corrective services officers, for their time and attention.

When talking one-on-one to newcomers or observers:

- Listen as much as you talk
- Always maintain a cheerful humility about how AA works
- Limit yourself to carrying your own honest message of recovery from alcoholism
- Do not brag about AA; rather, let results speak for us
- Remember that medication, psychiatry, or scientific theories of alcoholism are the business of professionals; we are not authorities on alcoholism. Similarly, our spiritual life does not make us experts on religion
- Let the inmates know about the benefits of sponsorship, as well as the temporary contact program which may be available in your area
- Show you can laugh at yourself
- Give out the AA Helpline number, not private numbers.

## PRE-RELEASE

Corrective services officers sometimes like to view AA as a source of peer-based mentoring for people in transition from an institution to living in the community. At the very least, we can provide a card to inmates with the local AA Helpline number and [www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au) so they can promptly get to meetings and make contact with local members. If you definitely know a reliable member will be available, offer for AA to escort them to their first meeting outside and exchange contact details for the inmate.

If the inmate will be moving to another part of Australia after release, provide contact details for the prisoner release contact in other Areas. The National Correctional Facility Coordinator can usually assist with this—contact General Service Office at [www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au) or [gso@aa.org.au](mailto:gso@aa.org.au) or 02 9599 8866.

## Correctional Facilities Correspondence Service

The Australian General Service Office has setup a Correctional Facilities Correspondence Service for prisoners wishing to correspond with AA members.

All correspondence is to be addressed to PO Box 44 Arncliffe, NSW 2205.

Full details of this correspondence service can be found in the pamphlet 04U-36 “Corrections Correspondence Outside” which can be obtained from your local Central Service Office or GSO.

It is suggested that members participating in this service take normal precautions to ensure their own privacy and safety by only corresponding via the above post office box and by not revealing any personal details (e.g.: postal or email address; telephone number; date of birth; employer).

It is also suggested that members do not send gifts to or make purchases on behalf of prisoners.”

## ATTACHMENT A

### USEFUL RESOURCES

#### FOR THE INMATE

Carry a range of simple, cheap AA literature that requires minimal reading. Don't load inmates up with too much confusing information; they will ask for more if they want it. Likewise, the Little Big Book is often more welcome than the full-sized *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Some inmates have reading difficulties so cassette tapes are often welcome. If there are Aboriginal inmates, source the tapes from the National Aboriginal Conventions. Remember that CDs are usually not permitted in correctional centres.

Relevant reading material includes:

- Regional AA journals, especially editions that have stories involving time in prison: Mainstay; Messages of Hope; Pathfinder; Serenity; The News; and, The Reviver.
- Just for Today card
- Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions card
- 44 Questions
- A Brief Guide to AA
- A Newcomer Asks
- AA at a Glance
- AA for the Aboriginal Woman
- AA for the Indigenous Australian
- Are You Sick of Being Charged (for Aborigines)
- Do You Think You're Different
- **How did I end up here? (for women in prison)**
- 'How It Works' from Chapter 5 of *Alcoholics Anonymous*
- Is AA for Me
- Is AA for You
- **It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell (for men in prison)**
- Making a Start in AA
- **Memo to an Inmate who may be Alcoholic**
- Questions & Answers on Sponsorship
- The Twelve Steps (Illustrated)
- This is AA
- Understanding Anonymity
- Where do I go from here?

#### FOR THE AA SPEAKER

- **AA in Correctional Facilities**
- **Carrying the Message into Correctional Facilities**
- Speaking at non-AA Meetings

- How AA Members Co-operate with Professionals
- **Carrying the Message behind these Walls (DVD)**
- **Inside View for professionals (DVD)**
- Australian AA Service Manual (from [www.aaservice.org.au](http://www.aaservice.org.au))
- AA Guidelines (from [www.aaservice.org.au](http://www.aaservice.org.au))

## ATTACHMENT B

### WHAT IS AA?

AA is a community-based option formed by alcoholics to help each other get and stay sober. We are a social movement based on a set of principles learnt from experience. There is no conflict between our approach and other options. However, we can vouch for good results amongst those who thoroughly follow AA's path even though our program is not amenable to research, especially in the short term.

The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no fees for AA membership or services.

Members remain anonymous but AA should be visible. However, AA's public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion.

AA is a worldwide non-profit fellowship of local groups that has been established in Australia since 1945.

AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution. It is not a religious organisation, but the word God is used to reflect the belief amongst members that a higher power rather than willpower has helped us find a solution to our drinking problem. AA does not wish to engage in any controversy so it does not endorse or oppose any cause.

### WHAT AA DOES

AA's basic philosophy is that one alcoholic can help another. AA members share their experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem; they give person-to-person 'sponsorship' to the alcoholic coming to AA from any source.

Our Twelve Step program offers the alcoholic a way to a satisfying life without alcohol. This program is discussed at AA meetings. In order to keep our sobriety, we try to give the program to other still-suffering alcoholics: that's why we're visiting the correctional facility.

### WHAT AA DOES NOT DO

- tell anyone that they're an alcoholic – that's for them to decide

- seek or accept contributions from non-members or any outside organisation
- keep any records of its membership
- define 'alcoholism' or profess any profound knowledge of its cause or 'cure'
- have any opinion on public policy or practices regarding what some professionals term 'alcohol dependence and abuse'
- compete with other treatments or get into debates about evidence for or against various treatment options—we are not professionals
- solicit members, make diagnoses or offer advice
- give initial motivation for alcoholics to recover
- provide drying out, professional treatment or other welfare services
- provide references for any purpose
- educate about alcohol or engage in its own research
- join councils or social agencies
- follow-up or try to control its members
- promise anything beyond the promises of sobriety set out in the Big Book.

## **REMEMBER:**

- 1. Non-AA professionals cannot be expected to be aware of AA Traditions;**
- 2. AA members are invited guests in the facilities;**
- 3. Co-operation is the key to successful *Twelfth Stepping* in Correctional Facilities.**

1. Co-operate with the facility. Although we have our own Traditions to guide us, when we are inside any institution we must follow their rules to the letter. The reasons for their rules may not seem clear to us, but it is not up to us to question them.
2. Personal appearance is vital. If you look as if you just rolled out of bed, you have already made a negative first impression and no matter how well you present your own message it may never be heard. Look as neat and as well-groomed as possible.
3. Personal conduct is also important while inside the facility. Be polite and respectful to the staff and inmates - we are there as their guests. Refrain from using any foul language in any Group situation.
4. When we are carrying the AA message into a Correctional Centre, we are not just one drunk talking to another. In their eyes, we represent the entire Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.
5. In order for the AA meeting to run smoothly in a Correctional Facility, it is necessary for all to be there early. How we look, act and talk are all the Correctional Officers are going to know about AA. In many cases, months of hard work have gone into establishing the relationship which enables AA to be invited into a Correctional Facility. Careless action at any level by AA members could destroy that relationship and AA would no longer be admitted to carry its message. Remember, we already know that AA works - let our new friends see, hear and talk to a winner.

## SOME DOs AND DON'Ts

1. You may only be able to bring in cigarettes and matches and all other personal property may have to be left in a locker at the front gate. Cigarette lighters may not be permitted.
2. Smoke **ONLY** in the area provided.
3. **DON'T** take out anything for anyone, no matter what it may be.
4. **DON'T** bring in anything for anyone, no matter how innocent it may appear to you.
5. **DO** let the authorities know on your way out if you have been asked to bring something in; alternatively, ring the contact on the next working day but **DON'T BRING ANYTHING IN**.

**REMEMBER, IN THEIR EYES YOU REPRESENT THE ENTIRE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS  
ANONYMOUS**



## GUIDELINE NO GL-23

# WORKSHOPS

In response to many enquiries requesting information on conducting workshops, this memo has been prepared to share with you some ways that workshops are conducted:

1. Each workshop selects or appoints one person to act as moderator.
2. Each workshop selects or appoints one person to act as reporter.
3. Each participant is asked to write his/her question on the subject under discussion and pass it to the moderator.
4. A time limit might be agreed on in advance of discussion.
5. When the topics for discussion have been listed, the moderator will proceed with each topic in turn, allowing each participant an opportunity to express his views, while remaining within an agreed time limit.
6. At the conclusion of the discussion of each topic, the moderator will ask for a 'sense of the meeting' on each question and this will be recorded by the reporter.
7. If the participants prefer to ask the questions verbally, the reporter records each question.
8. If all workshop sections are on the same topic, one reporter is selected to give a brief (5-10 minute) report to the whole conference, assembly etc, combining the sharing of all sections. Alternatively, if the various workshop sections discussed different topics, a reporter from each gives a brief (5-10 minute) report to the entire conference, assembly etc.
9. If there is only one workshop, such as a District Committee Meeting, AA Group, etc, the report can be copied for all participants or filed for reference.

### NOTE TO MODERATORS/REPORTERS:

It is not necessary to record all discussion; only the subject and the 'sense of the meeting' on each subject need be recorded.



## AA CO-OPERATION IN RESEARCH AND NON-AA SURVEY PROJECTS

As alcoholism has become a prime concern and target, more and more agencies, from top government echelons to local community organisations, have sought AA co-operation in conducting surveys and other research projects. The subject has been discussed in some detail by the North American Trustees' committee on *Co-operation with the Professional Community*, and on the suggestion of that committee we offer this memorandum to share AA experience on this subject.

First, a letter that Bill wrote to a researcher in 1968 sheds some light on the subject:

*"Thanks for your letter which outlines your research project. Whether such a project could succeed in any useful or meaningful way is a question that, in my view, can't be answered at all until soundings are made where the operation will take place. Therefore, I suggest that you inquire how feasible the project would be in the eyes of at least a few of the prospective participants (local AAs).*

*"There are plenty of AAs who believe in collaboration with researchers, but it is probable that many AAs couldn't care less about scientific or sociological evaluations; hence there is seeming indifference and hostility. This is the experience of some past researchers, particularly those who required the gathering of statistics, personal interviews in depth, and the like.*

*"I am sure you will have to work with specially interested AAs as individuals. Even they will want to know who will make the value judgments of research reports, what will be done with them, etc.*

*"If you are able to proceed with your plans, I would like very much to know the results."*

The following points offer AA experience and perspective:

1. AA is not opposed to research and most of our members are grateful for the interest and dedicated efforts of those outside our Fellowship.
2. Any individual AA member is free to participate in any project he or she chooses.
3. AA meetings traditionally are devoted exclusively to the AA programme.
4. Most AA Groups have not distributed questionnaires or arranged for interviews during a meeting; however, some Groups have done when the meeting has ended.
5. Frequently, CSOs can put researchers in touch with AA members who are willing and interested in participating in such projects, eg:
  - a) in large communities, perhaps a committee or sub-committee, made up of AA members who are interested in these projects, could take the responsibility for finding others who share this interest;

- b) in smaller communities, the Group officers or steering committee may be able to perform the same function.
- 6. Most AAs would like to find a way of co-operating which would be both within the AA Traditions and technically feasible for a researcher.
- 7. Decisions about such projects should be made by the local AA Groups in the area where they occur, after careful scrutiny of the project, as the requests might become pandemic.

One final quotation from Bill W, from "As Bill Sees It" (page 45):

*"Today, the vast majority of us welcome any new light that can be thrown on the alcoholic's mysterious and baffling malady. We welcome new and valuable knowledge, whether it issues from a test tube, from a psychiatrist's couch, or from revealing social studies. We are glad of any kind of education that accurately informs the public and helps to change its age-old attitude toward the drunk.*

*"We welcome additional information from Groups and members with experience to share."*

## 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.

## GUIDELINE NO GL-26

# OPERATION OF THE NATIONAL AA WEBSITE

## www.aa.org.au

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Consistent with our Primary Purpose of carrying AA's message of recovery, access to the site and all its contents will be unrestricted.
- The site will be used to provide information about AA to newcomers, members, health professionals, the media and the general public.
- Decisions about content and operation of the site will be based upon and reflect the spirit of the *12 Traditions* e.g., based on attraction not promotion.
- Links to other sites will only be permitted in limited circumstances and are subject to approval by the *General Service Office Management Group*.
- The full name of any member should not appear on the website.
- As far as possible work on the website should be done by volunteer AA members.
- Decisions to expand the size and scope of the site should be agreed by the *General Service Office Management Group*.
- The site will be reviewed by Conference each year in accordance with Advisory Action 27A/2001.

### FURTHER CONSTRAINTS:

Conference 2004 resolved that to avoid confusion as to suitability of material for AA websites, it was recommended that the following material not be published on websites:

- Poetry
- Prayers
- Song lyrics
- Tributes to individuals
- Plays
- Previously published non-AA material
- Anything unrelated to AA

It was further recommended that personal telephone numbers or last names of contacts not be published, including those that appear in email addresses.

## SECURITY

The General Service Office Manager should ensure that she/he has all the necessary documentation to prove the Board owns and has complete control of the National Website and, in particular, its URLs: [www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au) and [www.alcoholicsanonymous.org.au/](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.org.au/).

The General Service Office Manager should maintain an Operations Manual which has full details about the site to ensure it can continue seamlessly in the event of any of the management team leaving. This must contain all usernames and passwords used in the site. It should also contain up to date 'How-to' information.

## STYLE

The style is deliberately calm and understated. Bright colours, fancy logos, and glaring graphic devices should be avoided. Ease of reading and navigating through the site should be preserved.

## CONTENT

The content is divided up into five main areas:

Home page	Newcomers	Members	Health Professionals	Media
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The <i>Preamble</i>,</li> <li>•Meetings search</li> <li>•National Convention notice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•“<i>For anyone new to AA</i>”</li> <li>•“<i>AA fact file</i>”</li> <li>•“<i>Is AA for you?</i>”</li> <li>•“<i>A newcomer asks</i>”</li> <li>•How to contact AA</li> <li>•“<i>Message to teenagers</i>”</li> <li>•Find a meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Find a meeting</li> <li>•What's on</li> <li>•How to contact AA</li> <li>•“<i>AA fact file</i>”</li> <li>•Useful materials – including structure diagrams, PI materials, literature price list, What Nat Office does, Insurance information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•<i>Information for professionals</i></li> <li>•“<i>For anyone new coming to AA</i>”</li> <li>•“<i>AA fact file</i>”</li> <li>•Find a meeting</li> <li>•How to contact AA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•“<i>Information for professionals</i>”,</li> <li>•Anonymity letter to the media</li> <li>•“<i>For anyone new coming to AA</i>”</li> <li>•How to contact AA.</li> </ul>

## LINKS TO OTHER WEBSITES

At present we link **only to**: the GSO New York website; the site for the next Australian National Convention, and Al-Anon Family Groups in Australia. There is a slight danger that some links could be seen as AA's indirectly endorsing commercial sites and bodies that happened to be linked to other sites to which we were linked. However, people are increasingly sophisticated about web links and will take these links in their stride. Possible confusion related to the National Convention site would be outweighed by the value of the link.

In 2007, Conference considered whether the National Website should be linked to Area websites with a disclaimer, as practised by New York. It resolved that the Service Website should provide such links, but not the National site (Advisory Action #026/2007).



## MEETINGS LISTS

The meetings lists on the National Website are probably its most valuable service. It means that members from anywhere in the world can look up a meeting at any time of day or night. As more and more members gain access to the Internet, this value of this service will increase. Compared to the cost of printing, the costs of providing a web-based system are very small. It also reduces the time taken up by General Service Office staff in providing meeting information.

A member in each state called an *updater* keeps the meetings lists up to date. They have been given a username and password and instructions on how to change the meetings. In most cases the updaters get the information for the changes from the capital city CSO in their state which provides current meeting lists such as *"Your Pathfinder"*.

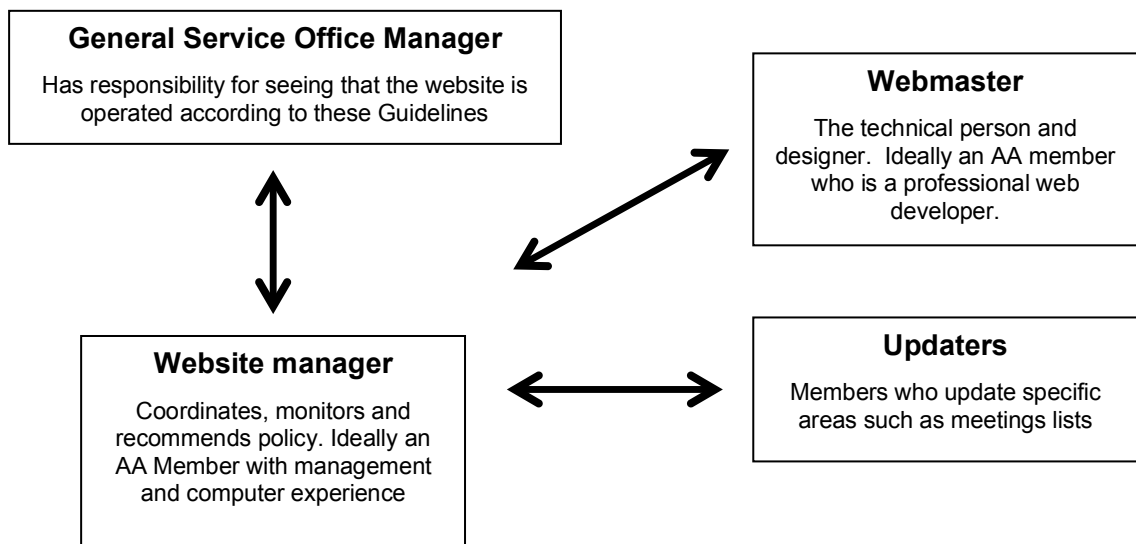
There may be circumstances when complaints come from the Fellowship in respect of the website listings including meetings that some members believe should not be listed. The process for handling these complaints is that the General Service Office, the updater and the website manager listen to them carefully and try to gather as much information as possible relating to the meeting in question. The current policy on listing is: "We will list all AA meetings. We will listen carefully to objections to any particular meeting. We will remove it only if it clearly and repeatedly breaches the *Traditions* in a manner which would cause serious damage to members or the Fellowship as a whole."

Therefore, a decision not to list or remove a meeting will be based on as much factual information as possible tested against the relevant *Traditions*. It is expected that this will be extremely rare.

***A Guideline for Updaters is available from General Service Office.***

## OPERATIONS

The National Website management structure is as follows



## OTHER AA WEBSITES

Members, groups and other AA bodies often ask for help in setting up their own websites. They should be directed to the ***Frequently asked Questions (FAQ) on AA websites*** to be found on the North American site [www.aa.org/](http://www.aa.org/). This document recommends that other bodies should be entirely responsible for setting up their own websites and the General Service Office should not provide assistance in the form of money or hosting facilities.

In 2007, Conference resolved that an AA Service Website be established in Australia, supported and funded by the General Service Board to facilitate the sharing of the work the Fellowship does in PI&CPC, T&CF and other service activities. This site is for internal communication, whereas the National Website is for AA's external outreach.

## MONITORING

At least once a year the Board should report to Conference on the National Website. The Board should:

- Ask permission for any major changes before undertaking them.
- Ensure that all content is still relevant and up to date.
- Review trends revealed by the automatic statistic gathering system. In particular the number of visits should be monitored.
- Check that the people who update the meetings lists in each state are still doing their job.
- Check on security and ensure that the Operations Manual is up to date.
- Report on the links to other websites.
- Report on any complaints it has received.

## GUIDELINE GL-27

## PROCESS FOR CHANGING AA SERVICE DOCUMENTS

This Guideline explains and describes a process recommended for keeping the AA 'service documents' up to date and reliable as working documents. Decisions made by the General Service Conference quite often affect one or more of the AA service documents. These are sometimes referred to as 'constitutional documents' or 'core documents' or 'structural documents'. They are:

- the Memorandum & Articles of Association of the company Alcoholics Anonymous Australia (Limited)
- the Conference Charter
- the *Australian AA Service Manual*
- the Conference Administrative Procedures
- the Composition, Scope and Procedure documents for all the Board and Conference committees
- the "Australian General Service Guidelines".

These documents form a stable framework for operations within the AA Service Structure. In effect and together, they describe the guidelines AA runs by, both traditional and legal. For this reason it is imperative that they be clear and concise, and that they all support each other without contradictions, inaccuracies or confusing statements.

## HISTORY

By 2000, there had in general been a lack of attention to the constitutional and structural implications of decisions made by Conference, and Conference decisions had not been taken through to their proper destinations in the service documents. The result was a confusing collection of documents in conflict, that created argument and uncertainty, and was impossible to use as a point of reference in disputes.

A *Constitutional Working Party* representing both Delegates and the Board, was set up by Conference 2002. The work identified areas of conflict, then confirmed the intent of Conference through a series of Advisory Actions, especially regarding the appointment processes for different types of Board members, and the required voting levels for different situations, and then integrated Conference's wishes into the service documents.

The overall intent was to bring all documents up to date, into clear alignment, to provide a process to keep them that way in future (see Section 9 of the "Australian AA Service Manual": "*Document Integration Group*", and to finalise the Australian AA Service Manual for a new edition.

## SOURCES OF RECOMMENDED CHANGE

Most changes come through Topics submitted by the Fellowship, the General Service Board or Conference-initiated task forces or working parties. These proposals are submitted to the Conference Agenda Committee by a certain date each year, for which there is a standard form available from General Service Office.

Other potential sources emerge during Conference itself, as recommendations from Conference Committees, amendments and motions without notice or 'floor actions'.

**At every level the question needs to be asked: "If this Topic goes through, what, if any, service documents will need to be changed?". To assist this process, the last item on the Agenda Committee's Agenda should ask this question of all Topics moving forward, and where indicated, a Service Document Impact statement should be attached. This should alert the Conference Session Chairperson that a 'special' Topic is going through, that will require a special vote and proper follow up integration.**

## VOTING PROCEDURES

Only 'registered Conference Members' may vote: Delegates who attend are 'registered'. In other words, you cannot vote if you don't turn up. Similarly, if you are absent from the room, the vote proceeds without you (provided there is a quorum).

Conference has two ways of voting: show of hands; or, ballot by tokens or paper.

For a vote to be valid, two conditions must be met:

		% of all registered Conference Members	If all 34 attend, this means
i)	at least two-thirds of all registered Conference members need to be present; and,	67	a quorum of 23
ii)	at least two-thirds of the quorum must vote either 'for' or 'against'.	44	no more than 7 can abstain

A simple majority of all the registered members of Conference is considered a suggestion to the Board; a two-thirds or more vote or a properly conducted Third Legacy election generally binds the Board.

All votes require a simple majority of all registered Conference Members except in the following circumstances where contentious or potentially divisive matters require more 'substantial unanimity' as sought in the Warranties:

TYPE OF MATTER	Substantial Unanimity (% of all registered Conference Members)
Changes to the <i>Conference Charter</i>	75
Changes to <i>The Australian AA Service Manual &amp; Guidelines</i>	75
Changes to the <i>Conference Administrative Procedures</i>	75
Changes coming from Conference to the Board's <i>Memorandum &amp; Articles of Association</i>	75
A reorganisation of the General Service Board or General Service Office staff	75
Conference challenges to changes made by the Board in its <i>Memorandum &amp; Articles of Association</i>	67
Conference challenges to secondary changes to the <i>Service Manual</i> , even though directly arising from decisions of Conference	67
Conference challenges to changes in Conference Committee <i>Composition, Scope &amp; Procedure</i> Documents	67
Overturning a decision of the Board (eg appointment of a Trustee)	67
To reject a single Regional Trustee candidate proposed jointly by Areas	67
If the outcome of a vote changes the status quo for important matters of policy or procedure, the Chair has the discretion to ask for two-thirds approval.	67

In serious circumstances, Conference may, at its discretion, vote in advance by a simple majority to increase the required level of vote. Conference could even ask for 100% unanimity on a matter.

### Minority Voice

After a deciding vote, the Conference Chair asks if there is any 'Minority Voice'. This is an opportunity for **a Conference member who voted against the majority** to make **new** arguments to conference; they cannot repeat the material already put to Conference.

After hearing the Minority Voice, **any Conference member who voted with the majority** can either:

- move to re-vote on the original motion; or,
- prepare a new motion.

If no one who voted in the majority suggests either of these options, the original vote stands and discussion ends.

If one of the options is put forward, the Chair then asks Conference if the 'Sense of Conference' is that there needs to be a re-vote. If a majority do not request a re-vote, the original vote stands.

### Floor Actions

Normally the only time Conference considers a Floor Action is when an emergency has arisen. Thus, Floor Actions are usually matters that are either too late to put on the Agenda or arise as a by-product of Committee deliberations.

Floor Actions are subject to the following procedures:

- 1) They are considered as the final item at Conference;
- 2) For each Floor Action, a 'Sense of the Conference' is taken whether to 'entertain the motion';
- 3) If a simple majority of Conference votes (by a show of hands) not to 'entertain the motion', the item is not heard. (If defeated, the matter can be brought back as a Topic the next year);
- 4) Conference takes a 'Sense of the Conference' as to whether the Floor Action is mentioned in the Conference Report.

## SECONDARY AND 'INDIRECT' CHANGES

Secondary changes are changes arising as a direct result of decisions of Conference, without which the Conference Advisory Action could not be implemented. Indirect changes to the Service Manual will turn up as errors of fact, which still need to be identified, but which can be changed by General Service Office independently, do not attract a 'DIG response' (action by *Document Integration Group*: refer Section 9: "The General Service Board" in the *"Australian AA Service Manual"*), and need to be included in future revisions of the Manual.

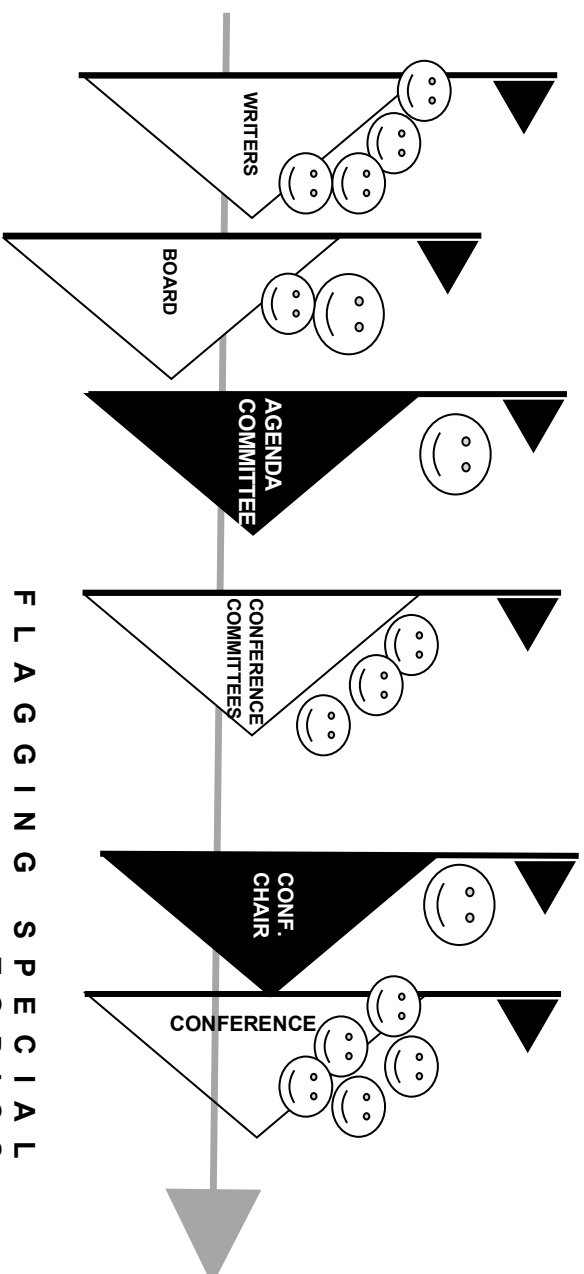
Secondary changes require a 2/3 disapproval of all Conference members.

'Disapproval' means 2/3 vote of all of Conference against a motion, where Conference votes to ratify decisions or appointments made by another body of AA in the area of its responsibility.

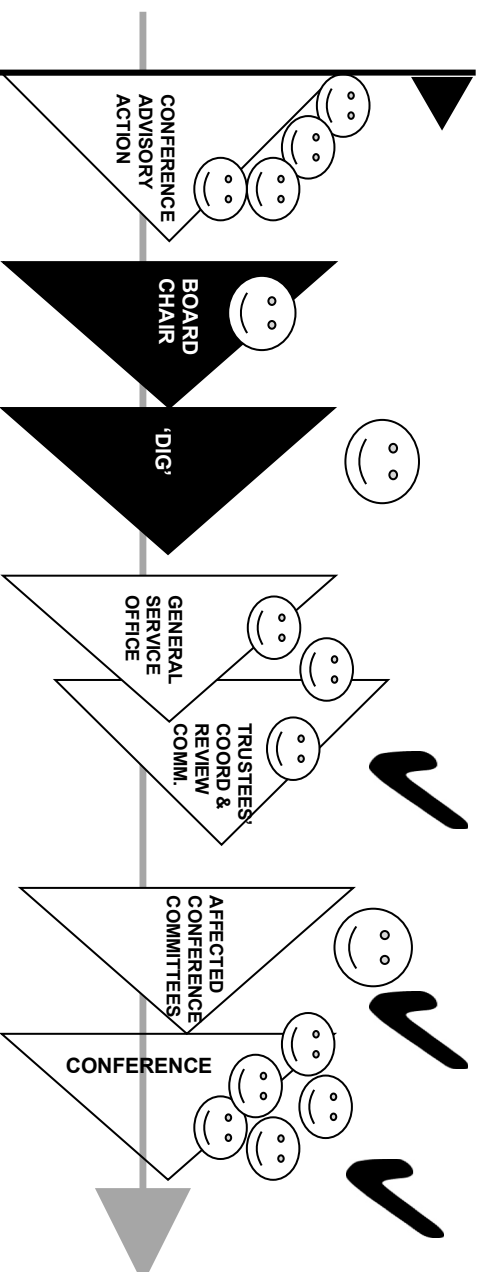
Applying the correct voting procedures is finally the responsibility of the Conference session Chairperson.

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING CHANGES TO SERVICE DOCUMENTS?

The Constitutional Working Party (2002-2004) recommended that the Service Manual be revised every 5 years. In the interim, the version on the web site should be kept current on an annual basis. This would be the natural result of the work of the DIG (Document Integration Group). Every 5 years then, the Report, Charter & Service Manual Committee would review accumulated changes and decide whether a new edition were necessary. In the meantime, the Report Charter & Service Manual Committee would review a Report from DIG or the Board Chair as part of their normal Agenda at Conference.



## FLAGGING SPECIAL TOPICS



## TRACKING IMPLEMENTATION

### DOCUMENT INTEGRATION PROCESS

ADVISORY ACTION: Conference

SEARCH: Board Chair

CONFERENCE REPORT: confirms that changes are needed to service documents

**RESPONSIBLE: Board Chair +/- DIG:**

ANALYSE: Impact Analysis: identifies primary and secondary changes needed to service documents

PLAN: Process identification for each document impacted

DO: Assign tasks

FEEDBACK: from all affected

RENEW: collate final drafts

REVIEW: Board, General Service Office (GSO) Trustees' Coordination & Review Committee

INSERT: NOAA, where necessary

REPORT: to relevant Conference Committees of next Conference

DISAPPROVAL: All Conference 2/3 disapproval (if any) process for secondary changes.





# HOW A CONFERENCE TOPIC IS DEVELOPED

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

### What is a Topic?

The annual General Service Conference is the *group conscience* of AA Australia. A Topic is an idea that is sent to the Conference that is intended, directly or indirectly, to help the Fellowship advance its *Primary Purpose* (helping alcoholics to achieve and maintain sobriety).

### Where do Topics come from?

Most Topics come from the Fellowship at the grass roots. They may come from an individual, Group, District or Area. They may also come from various AA service bodies, such as the *General Service Board*, the *Document Integration Group*, temporary committees or working parties. No member is excluded from submitting a Topic direct to *General Service Office*. But when Topics originate from just one or a small number of people, benefit is derived from seeking a broader input, from District and Area. This may be difficult or impossible due to distance or other factors ~ take your Topic as far through the suggested refinement process as you can.

### Extra information

Section 7 of the *Australian AA Service Manual* includes a flow chart explaining the passage of a Topic through to an Advisory Action of the Conference. There is also a detailed description of the purpose and processes of Conference itself. This is recommended reading for all those participating directly or indirectly in Conference.

### Quality of Topics

Many Topics come to Conference as well-defined proposals in clear English, appropriate to AA as a whole. But a significant number have been confused, incomplete, based on errors of fact, ambiguous or related only to an issue that should be sorted out locally. The procedures below may appear time consuming, but much time can be wasted both before and during Conference if the Topics are not well-prepared and thought out.

### Submission date

Topics are submitted to the Conference Agenda Committee by a certain date each year, for which there is a standard form available from General Service Office. General Service Office notifies Area Delegates of deadline dates at the designated time each year, but Topics can be developed all year. It is best to ensure that contact details are filled in, to help clarify any questions. Only General Service Office has access to these contacts. Even the Agenda Committee may not access them. Submissions not received by the due date will not go to Conference that year.

### What happens then?

The Conference Agenda Committee may reject certain Topics or rearrange or group them together. Conference Committees may recommend changing them again according to their special understanding of current conditions or in light of new perspectives gained at Conference. Any such changes are clearly explained to Conference and are circulated in the Conference Report. Topics

accepted by Conference become Advisory Actions of Conference, most of which are carried out or overseen by the General Service Board (see *Service Manual* Section M-07).

## RECOMMENDED DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

1. Local sections of AA take care of their own responsibilities. Ask the question: "Is this Topic relevant to AA as a whole?" If your Topic is relevant beyond the local, then proceed.
2. Obtain the appropriate form from your GSR, Area Delegate, the national AA website ([www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au)) or General Service Office ([gso@aa.org.au](mailto:gso@aa.org.au)).
3. Read the form carefully so you know what will be expected at submission time.
4. Prepare in full the detail of background and research, with references.
5. Take the Topic to your *Home Group* for discussion, and if suggested, do further background research with *Group* involvement.
6. Plan your time. Topic development takes time. Find out when the *Area Assembly* will meet on Conference Topics. If you are not in an official service position, do your best to be present at any discussions at *District* or *Area* levels.
7. With your *GSR*, take the Topic to your *District* for further discussion. If suggested, undertake further research and make amendments.
8. If the *District* feels that the Topic has merit, have your *GSR* and *DCM* take it to the next *Area Assembly*.
9. If *Area* agrees that the Topic does have merit, the *Area Committee* may arrange for one or more individuals (not necessarily the originator) to prepare a workshop on the Topic for the next *Area Assembly*.
10. After the Workshop, the *Area Assembly* (with the option of going back to all *Groups* in the *Area*), should now be in a position to submit a Topic to Conference that is well-conceived and researched to provide relevant background.

## PRESENTATION: FILLING OUT THE FORM

Ideally ~

### General:

- Topics are presented on the proper form, and respond carefully to the questions on the form.
- If possible they are submitted electronically
- If not electronic, they are written, typed or photocopied, and expressed very clearly and concisely.
- Contacts are present in case Agenda Committee or General Service Office need to clarify something.

### The wording:

- Topics are clear, concise, and unambiguous: they are written so that they can not be taken more than one way.
- Any examples given to illustrate the Topic are given separately, and not mixed up with the Topic itself (sometimes a Topic has been rejected because people voted against the example, not the Topic).

- If complex, they are divided up so that there is no more than one idea in each subsection. Conference can then vote on these items separately if necessary.

### **The background:**

- A brief description gives enough information for Conference to fully understand the background. How did the Topic originate?
- Background information is ideally in electronic form, as well as the whole submission.

### **The AA purpose**

- The purpose of the Topic is clear and explained: in what way is AA as a whole likely to benefit from this? (Conference deals with issues for AA as a whole, not local ones).
- The Topic supports the AA Legacies (Recovery, Unity, Service) and likewise is within the spirit of the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts.

### **The cost**

- Any significant costs are noted and if possible, estimated.

### **Who has endorsed this Topic?**

- A very brief indication is given of the Topic's journey and who has endorsed it.
- This is stated in anonymous terms, i.e. 'individual', 'Group', 'District', 'Area': no specifics.

### **Service document impacts**

- Mention this if it is obvious in advance that the Topic will mean changes to AA publications such as the General Service Manual and the AA Guidelines.

## **EXAMPLES FROM PAST TOPICS**

(the Submission Form has changed over time, causing differences in headings)

### **TOPIC #007/2000**

- 1) **That Conference instructs the General Service Office *[now General Service Office]* to produce guidelines for groups on opening bank accounts.**
- 2) **That Conference instructs the General Service Office to investigate procedures for claiming money in dormant bank accounts originally opened by AA groups.**

### **WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THE TOPIC?:**

Small groups have experienced problems with accessing funds held in bank accounts requiring two signatories, when one of the signatories is no longer a group member and a replacement cannot be found.

Many groups close down without closing bank accounts or are unable to access funds for varying reasons.

### **WHAT DISCUSSION ON THE TOPIC LED TO IT'S SUBMISSION?:**

Simply personal experience.

#### ***OUTCOME OF TOPIC:***

*While this Topic is almost too briefly expressed and a little terse (aggressive), it is extremely clear, and the two parts are cleanly separated. It is not clear who is endorsing it. Part 1) is not clearly related to AA as a whole, but could assist some Groups locally as a service item. Part 2) does affect AA as a whole, as we understand thousands of bank accounts opened by Group members lie neglected and dormant all over Australia – good AA money that could be working for carrying the message. The Topic went first to the Conference Finance Committee.*

*The Conference later accepted the recommendation of that Committee that for*

*Part 1), no Guideline be produced, but instead, some basic information be given in the new “Group Donation Plans” pamphlet that was then under development.*

*Part 2), was supported by both the Committee and Conference, and went on to pass a new Advisory Action:*

**ADVISORY ACTION #007/2000**

*“Conference resolved that the General Service Office should investigate procedures for claiming money in dormant bank accounts originally opened by AA Groups”.*

*This was done but was unsuccessful as they were not named ‘AA’.*



**TOPIC #011/2000**

**Could a pamphlet and possibly a video or booklet be made specifically for women’s prisons? Most of the literature in General Service Office stock is directed to men’s prisons.**

**WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OR REASON FOR THIS TOPIC?**

Our Group donates literature to a women’s prison as payment for rent for meeting venue. It would be great to have a booklet, pamphlet or video to send to prison that specifically targets female inmates.

**WHAT DISCUSSION LED TO ITS SUBMISSION?**

A recent television programme called “Doing Time” made it apparent that alcohol is a major problem and a contributing factor to their imprisonment and decline in standards of living and life.

*[Other sections of the form were not filled out]*

**OUTCOME OF TOPIC:**

*Advisory Action #011/2000: “Conference resolved that material specific to women in prisons be made available and that an investigation of local and overseas resources be made to facilitate that”.*

*This was researched by the Trustees’ Treatment and Correctional Facilities Committee of the General Service Board, using input from our World Service Delegates and GSO New York contacts. As no suitable material was found to exist, the Board went ahead and produced a booklet based on adapting the existing “It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell” for men, and adding new stories from Australian women.*

*The final product “How Did I End Up Here?” was approved as Advisory Action #024/2004, and is now available.*

*This is a nice example of an AA need fulfilled – a gap in the Service literature. It actually had two questions for Conference: 1) Need for literature for women in prison? (yes/no). and 2) What kind of literature? (pamphlet – booklet – video).*

## SUGGESTIONS FOR AA MEMBERS SPEAKING AT SCHOOLS

The AA suggested Guideline below is based on the experiences of various members of AA who have been directly involved in the setting up of a school data base, introductory letters to schools, follow up procedures, workshops, and speaking to students at schools.

### 1. SET UP & MAINTAIN SCHOOLS' & SPEAKERS' LISTS

#### *Set up and Maintain High Schools Database*

- At the beginning of the school year use Internet directories (White pages & Education Department website) to compile an up to date database of the names, addresses, phone numbers & email addresses of all high schools in the city.
- Write an invitation letter (sample below) and send it to all the schools on the database (no later than the 30<sup>th</sup> Jan). Adapt the letter for those schools that were visited the previous year, by repeating the gratitude we have for being invited in the previous year.
- A month or two after the initial letter is sent, follow-up with an identical e-mail letter to the schools that have not responded. (This allows for checking of both postal & email addresses).

#### **Sample School Invitation Letter**

Dear Sir / Madam (use real name),

I / We represent Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). We would welcome the opportunity to provide information about AA to your students.

With your permission, we could share how many of us, including young people, have been able to arrest alcoholism through AA. We have included some pamphlets about AA for your information.

Last school year we visited x schools, speaking to approximately x young people and x teachers in the xxxxxx and surrounding areas. The response from the schools was very positive with many schools providing letters of reference for the value of the information provided. Copies of these letters are enclosed. The sessions are provided free of charge by volunteer AA members.

I look forward to hearing from you and to providing any further information about AA.

Yours Sincerely,

Local Public Information Committee

(Include Pamphlets of "AA at a Glance", "Message to Teenagers")

### ***Set up and Maintain a List of Speaker Volunteers***

Throughout the year keep a list of school speaker volunteers up to date by collecting information on a service work form and updating the school speaker database (include information regarding availability). School speakers should have at least 6 months of sobriety time up. It's also, beneficial, if speakers have knowledge of AA's 12 Traditions.

### ***Inquiries and Invitations to Speak***

Throughout the year, Central Service Offices (CSO) refer inquiries for school visits to the PI Coordinator.

## **2. ORGANISE SCHOOL VISITS**

### ***Co-ordinate with Schools***

The CSO passes on inquiry details to the PI Co-ordinator, and a suitable time is arranged for the school visit.

Information needed at time of contact:

- Time of visit (you need to arrange to meet speakers 10 -15 mins prior to appointment time).
- Contact name.
- Where the AA speakers should meet (usually an administration office).
- How many students ?
- Boys, girls or mixed class ?
- How much time has been allocated ?
- Talk to the school co-ordinator about the format of the event and see if there are any special requirements that the school has.
- Ask if it is possible for the teacher to be prepared to ask a question or two if the students are too shy to ask.

### ***Co-ordinate with Speakers***

The PI Co-ordinator should also be in contact with volunteer AA speakers. New speakers should be contacted and sent a **“Speaking at Non AA Meetings”** pamphlet. New speakers should also be sent out with a more experienced speaker on their first speaking engagement. A follow up call to see how speakers went at the school is a good way to maintain contact with the volunteer speakers.

Once a time for the school as been set for a visit, the PI Co-ordinator should contact school speakers to arrange speakers for the school. The PI Co-ordinator should pass along the following information to the schools speakers:

- What type of school – private, state, mixed class or not, age of students.
- Name of school co-ordinator.
- What time to meet and where.
- Who will be doing the introduction and what the format will be.

### **Suggestions for PI Co-ordinator**

- Make sure all speakers get equal time to share. Don't hog the floor.
- Watch the ego.

### ***Some Do's and Don'ts for School Speakers***

- Dress appropriately, clean and tidy.
- Do arrive on time.
- Don't go to a school if you have children attending this school (your children have the right to their own anonymity).
- Remember that we may be the only Big Book that these people will see.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Happy smiling faces and a zest for life is the best message we can carry.

## **3. VISIT FORMAT**

The following is suggested format for speaking at schools and usually includes: Introduction; Speaker's Sharing, Question and Answer time. Copies of the pamphlets: "A Message to Teenagers" are given to the students.

### ***Introduction***

The introduction should last for approximately 5 minutes. Remember not to lecture or preach.

- A brief history of AA beginnings (***remember to keep it simple***).
- Mention our anonymity principle.
- Self supporting (not being paid to be here today).
- Not here to tell you not to drink.
- Statistics –
  - o Number of AA members world wide (over 2,000,000).
  - o Number of Meetings in their City.
  - o What times meeting are on.
- Who can go to a meeting.
- How to contact AA – Phone number in the phone book.
- Write the local CSO telephone number or AA helpline number on the blackboard or whiteboard.
- What AA does and what AA does not do.
- We do not give advice on medical, psychiatric, gender or any problems other than alcoholism. (*Tradition 10*).
- We do not provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money or social services. (*Tradition 6*).
- No shame – we talk about it today.
- Mention Al-Anon and Alateen if appropriate, noting that they are separate entities to AA.
- Thank you for allowing us here today.
- We are not an expert in the disease of alcoholism. We can only tell our own story of what it was like, and how we found recovery through the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. (*Tradition 8*).

### ***Speaker's Sharing***

The personal sharing time for each speaker should be 10-15 minutes, depending on the time that the school has allocated.

### **What to Speak About**

- Opinions expressed represent our own and are not necessarily the opinions of AA as a whole.
- First drink – age – circumstances.
- How we felt before and after we started drinking.
- The sort of trouble it caused even in the early days.
- Alcoholism – compulsion & obsession – These reactions to alcohol makes me different from a non-alcoholic.
- Dangerous situations (in a general way – remember we are talking to students and teachers).
- Degeneration of physical & mental health.
- Where alcoholism took us.
- What happened when we got to AA.
  - o How we are now.
  - o What the program of AA has done for us.
  - o No longer alone, share my experience and help others.

### **What NOT to Speak About**

- Sex.
- Religion or religious organisations (a lot of schools are church-administered).
- Brands of alcohol.
- Glorification of drugs.
- Swearing.
- Bog down in personal stories.
- Graphic descriptions.
- Personal remarks directed at teachers or any other individuals.
- Suggest our programme is a cure for everything.
- Debate on any outside issues.

### ***Questions and Answers***

Allow 5 mins or so for any questions. Listed below are some sample questions and suggested replies.

Q. How do I know if I am an alcoholic?

A. Can you guarantee your behaviour? Can you stop at one? Does your drinking cause you or others problems? Is alcohol costing you more than money? Do you have blackouts?

Q. How much do I need to drink to be an alcoholic?

A. It's not the amount you drink – it's how it makes you feel.

Q. How often do I need to drink to be an alcoholic?

A. Again it's not even how often you drink – it's what happens when you do.

Q. Everyone I know drinks a lot – are they all alcoholics ?

A. No.

Q. I think my Dad/Mum/friend/etc. is an alcoholic. Can you help him/her?

A. AA can help – You can go the Alateen or Al-Anon.



Q. What if you don't want to stop?

A. You need to want to stop.

Q. What if I only drink light beer?

A. Alcohol can affect any one. Light beer is still alcohol.

Q. What should I do if my friends pressure me to drink?

A. Talk to a teacher, parent, or friend.

## 4. FOLLOW-UP VISIT - FORMAT

Following the visits to each of the schools send a thank you letter (sample below) to the school contact inviting feedback.

### ***Sample School Thanks Letter***

Dear Sir / Madam (use real name),

Alcoholics Anonymous would like to thank you for providing the opportunity to speak at your school. We hope that the service was of benefit to all students that attended.

We look forward to hearing from you and would appreciate receiving any feedback or comments from students or teachers. We are happy to provide any further information you require about Alcoholics Anonymous.

Yours Sincerely, Public Information Committee



**GUIDELINE GL-30**

# **PI & CPC AND T& CF: COORDINATORS AND FORUMS**

## **COMBINED GUIDELINE FOR CO-ORDINATORS & FORUMS**

**for Public Information & Co-operation with the Professional Community (PI&CPC) or  
Treatment & Correctional Facilities (T&CF)**

### **THE CO-ORDINATORS – APPOINTMENT & TERMS**

- The term of office is two years, taking effect on January 1<sup>st</sup> of the year following the most recent Forum (on the basis that Forums are to be held by early October, every two years, i.e. in the month before Conference).
- The new Co-ordinator is appointed by the Chairman of the respective Trustees' Committee, in consultation with the Board at its meeting immediately after candidates have been assessed at Conference.
- Nominations for the position are invited at the Forum as well as by prior response to notices on AA and Service websites and in the September AA Around Australia news sheets.
- Nomination forms are available from National Office or from the Co-ordinators.

### **SUGGESTED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE**

- Available time
- Basic computer literacy & regular computer access
- Knowledge and experience in AA Service
- Understanding of General and Central Service structures.
- Familiarity with AA Service literature.
- Experience in service other than at group level
- Experience in the relevant field

### **FUNDING OF CO-ORDINATOR ACTIVITIES**

The Co-ordinator may claim up to \$800.00 per annum (2007) to cover expenses incurred in carrying out the duties for which he/she was appointed. An amount currently (2007) of up to \$800 pa is available from General Service Office on a receipt-refund basis.

Requests for additional funds should be made to the General Service Board, with details supplied. The General Service Board may pay for the relevant Chairs of Trustee Committees and the relevant National Coordinators to attend Forums. The Forum is responsible for funding any other invited guests to attend.

## THE ROLE

Co-ordinators are asked:

- To act as positive communication links, through actively encouraging & promoting the growth of PI&CPC / T&CF activities nationwide, reporting in several directions, such as in writing; email; the Service website; displays and National Forums;
- To make maximum use of modern communication tools, especially the Service website, with the assistance of the Webmaster;
- To be in regular contact with the Chairperson of the relevant Trustees' Committee in order to be apprised of Service opportunities;
- To liaise with the Board and National Office in seeking or conveying requested Forum-related information, and in implementing national scale projects;
- To play an active part in the planning and implementation of the relevant National Forum.

## REPORTING:

**Short Reports to Board February & July**

**Annual Reports to the Conference**

**Reports to the relevant National Forum**

## NATIONAL FORUMS

### Bidding and Host Planning Committees

Bidding by an Area to host the relevant National Forum follows the same procedure as for Regional Forums. Bids are submitted to Conference at least two years in advance where they are reviewed and approved by the Conference. A plan and budget should be included in the bid.

Conference should select the Area to hold the Forum with regard to rotation of the event throughout Australia, and any bidding Area's ability to organise a successful forum. It is the Coordinator's job to encourage and facilitate appropriate bids and bidders.

The Chair of the relevant Trustees' Committee will await the results of the Conference bids and take these into account before making a final decision about the appointee to the following Co-ordinator position.

### Host Planning Committee Responsibilities

A useful list of responsibilities for members of Host Planning Committees is available for download from the Service website.

## Ideas for Forum sessions

- Widen participation by inviting suggested topics from the Fellowship on websites & AAAA news sheets prior to a Forum. Many people are not able to attend Forums but may read about them in the website reports and may well have good suggestions or special needs for knowledge.
- Invite local professionals & managers of schools, organisations, treatment facilities, correctional system, armed services, media, ministry etc to suggest topics, or join working groups, discussion panels or sharing sessions, especially related to 'how we might help each other'.
- Look for people to share initiatives that may be useful to others.
- The General Service Conference in 2011 recommended that organising committees of National Forums consider cost implications for Areas, should parallel sessions be scheduled. (i.e., a PI & CPC related session at the same time as a T&CF related session).

## Finance

Current practice is that any seed funding comes from the hosting Area(s). Any surplus is either returned to those Areas or passed on to the following Forum as seed money.

Most Forum Host Committees have opened a bank account. As for Regional Forums, the Board will pay for a National Office staff member or Board member, preferably the Chair of the relevant Trustees' Committee, to attend the Forum.

The HPC Treasurer keeps records and reports on the financial position throughout, including initial budget, monthly statements and final report. See also Guideline GL-15.

**Service Website** Coordinators may share Service information at national level through the Service website, portable displays and the news sheets published with AA Around Australia. The Service website is a useful tool for Coordinators in fulfilling this task. The Service website is under continuous review and improvement: [www.aaservice.org.au/](http://www.aaservice.org.au/). It is suggested that the Coordinators:

- Source and provide relevant information or reading on line or download, such as position advertisements, notices, reports, literature lists, Guidelines, newsletters and other useful information;
- Ensure that AAAA, PIAA and the T&C Newsletter are available for download as they become available.
- Call for answers to questions from the *'Ask-it Basket'*.
- Publicise the Service website to the Fellowship including at the Forums and through the AA Around Australia newsletters, and assist the Fellowship to access the site when requested.

## DATABASE

Coordinators should keep a list of available email, web and/or phone contacts for AA groups who have easily-accessible contacts, such as Area Delegates (able to pass information on to Area

Committee office bearers), CSO PI&CPC/T&CF people, Board and Conference Chairs. National Office is usually able to supply Area Delegate, Conference and CSO contacts.

## DISPLAY

Co-ordinators need to be familiar with and promote the full range of relevant Service literature;

The Board has asked the Coordinators to put together portable Service displays and take them around the country to show at Forums, Area Assemblies, Regional Forums, Conventions, weekends, rallies etc. The type of display is not specified, and it has been left to the Coordinator's judgment as to what would be useful. Funding is available on application of a plan with budget.

Suggestions from the Fellowship for types of displays include:

- Examples (including photographs) of service being done in a variety of places and institutions
- Resources available for PI&CPC/T&CF work (multimedia); special displays illustrating particular areas of Service;
- About the Service Website: address, site map, links, how to use it (instruction sheets for handout) + computer package for setting up a demonstration;
- Loopable video/PowerPoint etc on disc, for kiosk or laptop displays.

## GUIDELINE NO GL-31

# PRESENTING AA TELEVISION COMMUNITY SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO AUSTRALIAN TELEVISION STATIONS

## Purpose

The goal of this guideline is to provide information on how to identify and present AA conference-approved, Television Community Service Announcements to television broadcasters in Australia based on the experience of a PI committee in an Australian Capital city.

## Suggested Procedures

### GETTING STARTED

1. **Be informed** – Access the AA service web site, attend Public Information workshops/forums and Traditions meetings in your District / Area and read the relevant AA literature:
  - Refer to the Public Information Workbook “Radio and Television Community Service Announcements – CSAs” (page 41)
  - Refer to the “Public Information and Co-operation with the Professional Community” AA Guideline No GL-07 in the Australian AA Service Manual. Also available online at; <http://www.aaservice.org.au/members/AAGuidelines>
2. **Form a committee**, focus on the primary purpose, make a plan, who, how, when?
3. **Consult widely** with others, identify the existing AA PI experience, District / Area/ CSO/ General Service Office - stay within the AA structure:
  - Seek support for your plan from District committee and Area Assembly (may include financial support for the purchase or production of TV-Community Service Announcements from the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous).
  - Find out if any other AA TV CSAs have been aired recently or are planned to be aired in your area.
4. **Review available CSA's**: The General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous has a number of existing Australian content TV-CSA's available for purchase.

## APPROACH TV STATIONS / ORGANISATIONS

1. **Contact the TV broadcasters** in your area, and identify the appropriate person to speak to within the organisation; most broadcasters have a specific role allocated to Community Service Announcements.
2. **Establish the specific production Format** required by each broadcaster, technologies are constantly being updated and may include,
  - Digital Betacam
  - Betacam SP
3. **Select appropriate length.** Australian AA TV – CSA are produced in 15 second, 30 second, or 60 second durations, find out the preference of the broadcaster (experience suggests 30 second segments may be preferable).

## PURCHASE EXISTING AUSTRALIAN CSA

The General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous has a number of existing Australian content TV-CSA's available for purchase.

1. **Purchase.** Having identified the appropriate specific current format requirements, arrangements can then be made with the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous for the relevant format to be *purchased* or produced.
2. **Identify the Key number.** Each AA TV-CSA has an identifying *Key number* it is important to identify the Key number and supply this identifier to broadcasters. Example: (Alcoholics Anonymous 'Force of Nature' Key Number: PRSP8052WTB30) These key numbers are usually codes that include the Production House name, Production date, Clients name, Commercial Title and Length
3. **Current Terminology**
  - *TV Commercials* - This is the general description used by Production Houses, TV Stations etc to describe the material on a file/disk/tape that is ready to be aired by a TV Station.
  - *Community Service Announcements* – This is the description often given by TV Stations for TV Commercials being aired at no expense to Not for Profit Organisations
  - *Community File* – is the terminology used by TV Stations for their free 'Date Claimer Announcements'



## PRODUCING A NEW AUSTRALIAN AA-TV COMMUNITY SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT BY ACCESSING INTERNATIONAL AA-TV COMMUNITY SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Starting From Scratch

This Guideline outlines the procedures for accessing, re-editing and classification of an existing International AA "TV-Community Service Commercial", for broadcasting in Australia.

1. **Accessing overseas AA TV community service commercials.**

English language AA TV and Radio Service Commercials that have been broadcast in the USA and UK can be viewed on their websites, follow the 'Media' and 'Public Service Announcements' links e.g.:

US/Canada at: <http://www.aa.org/lang/en/subpage.cfm?page=42>

UK at <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/newcomer/videoh.shtml>

2. **Select** a specific international AA TV CSA.

3. **Seek assistance** from the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous to obtain:

- Approval from the World Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous for the use of the International AA TV–CSA in Australia, and
- A master copy of the specific International TV AA–CSA from World Service office of Alcoholics Anonymous.

4. **Convert to local format**

A number of procedures need to be followed to enable the re-editing of a TV commercial for Australian broadcasting. The format of the original International master copy will need to be *converted into a format* that an Australian television production company can use for re-editing and voice over. For example; the 'Force of Nature' master copy received from the USA was in 'NTSC DigiBeta Master' format and needed to be converted to PAL DigiBeta format prior to the Australian re-editing. (There are a number of Specialist Companies that can do this work)

5. **Re-editing**

- A Television production company will then need to re-edit and add **Australian voice-over** to the converted AA TV-CSA into 15 second, 30 second and 60 second segments and produce a master copy.
- The Australian AA website ([www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au)) address should also be added.

## 6. Classification

- The Classification and the issuing of a Free to Air CAD number of the re-edited Australian commercial must be obtained on completion. (Application and Classification may be obtained by the TV production company undertaking the re-editing) CAD cannot issue a CAD Number or provide final classification advice until a commercial is submitted in final form along with all the relevant documentation See [www.freetv.com.au](http://www.freetv.com.au)

## 7. Approval and Distribution

- The completed re-edited, classified, Australian TV-CSA master copy then becomes the property of the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Copies of the re-edited, classified, Australian TV-CSA can then be purchased through the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous in the appropriate format required by broadcasters. (See above '2. *Purchasing existing Australian CSA*'.)
- In some circumstances, the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous may initiate and complete the entire process itself.

## 8. Digital distribution and Other Production Options

- Digital distribution of AA TV CSAs to TV stations and networks from a remote third party supplier (usually the re-editing production company) has also been used successfully rather than a cassette delivery approach. However, this may include some cost to the receiving broadcaster. Care should be taken in supplying the broadcaster with correct Identification Key Number of the AA TV CSA if pursuing this option.
- There are alternative processes to produce and/or have AA TV CSAs broadcast. PI committees can produce their own CSA's. These then need to be subsequently 'approved by the *General Service Conference of AA in Australia*'. Once approved they can be classified by Free TV and be aired on TV stations and networks following the procedure above.

## GUIDELINE NO GL-32

# A.A. WEB SITES: SETTING UP A LOCAL WEB SITE

Decisions in the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous are usually made through an informed group conscience and the decision to create a Web site 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.

Early on, it is important to agree upon a method for establishing 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 Web site, 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 Web site. As part of this process, committees may wish to bring technical questions to experts in the field.

## 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, Web site committees not only discuss the technical aspects of developing a Web site but also address questions related to preserving the spiritual connection created by one alcoholic talking with another. Some committees have reported a loss of the "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!

## WEB SITE 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. Web site, it has been suggested that a Web master (Web manager) be appointed or elected. The Web master is responsible to the committee or the groups served.

One area has the following experience: Their Web site 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 Web site chairperson, and their term of service is two years. In addition, a Web master, alternate Web master and other ad hoc members are responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the Web site. (Experience indicates this can be time-consuming if the Web master is responsible for updating local meeting information.)

Some committees choose to create their own Web site guidelines, including:

description of the site's purpose;

details of the Web site's content;

procedures for adding or removing content;

committee rotation schedule;

defining the difference between a Web site committee and a Web site maintenance team (e.g. Web master and alternate); guidelines for the Web site 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, Web site 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.au](http://www.aacentraloffice.org.au) or [www.area999aa.org.au](http://www.area999aa.org.au)).

This has proved to be a positive resolution in support of A.A.'s trademarks and service marks.

## **WEB SITE CONTENTS**

Copyright restrictions protect material displayed on Web sites just as copyrights protect A.A.'s printed literature. Permission must be obtained from General Service Office of AA Australia prior to including A.A.W.S. or A.A. Grapevine material.

Just as with A.A. newsletters, Web sites 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 the A.A. Grapevine, the following words should appear beneath the Preamble or any article or cartoon reprinted from the Grapevine:

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

We ask that you do not reproduce items that are currently available on the National AA Australia, G.S.O. or A.A. Grapevine Web sites. Instead, link to the appropriate pages of the sites:

[www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au), [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) and [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org).

## A.A. TRADITIONS

We observe all A.A.'s principles and Traditions on A.A. Web sites. **Anonymity**—As anonymity is the “spiritual foundation of all our Traditions,” we practice anonymity on public A.A. Web sites at all times.

Unless password-protected, an A.A. Web site is a public medium, and, therefore, requires the same safeguards that we use at the level of press, radio and film. In simplest form, this means that A.A.s do not 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 Web site host. Web site committees have avoided any host site that requires the inclusion of mandatory advertising space or links to commercial sites.

**Non-affiliation, non-endorsement**—Linking to other A.A. Web sites 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 conscience 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.

The same caution is advised when choosing a Web hosting site. Many “free” Web hosting services require that the Web site include mandatory advertisements or links. Most A.A. Web site 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 Web site through a service that does not include mandatory advertisements or links.

It is suggested that the Web site 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.)

## **“PRIVATE” SECTIONS**

The Australian General Service Office has heard of some districts and areas that have designated certain parts of their Web sites 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 Web master or another trusted servant that you are an A.A. member. In other cases, access is only available to those holding specific service positions. Web site committees that are considering creating password-protected sections of their Web sites 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 Web sites 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 Web site 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, the General Service Office has not heard of any major problems regarding non-A.A.s retrieving confidential A.A. information from these private sections. However, Web site 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. Web site. 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.

## **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.

A guiding resource of shared A.A. experience regarding Web sites is the G.S.O. service piece “Frequently Asked Questions About A.A. Web Sites,” question seven:

**Q. What about anonymity?**

*We observe all A.A.’s principles and Traditions on our Web sites. Since anonymity is “the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions,” we practice anonymity on A.A. Web sites at all times. An A.A. Web site is a public medium, which has the potential for reaching the broadest possible audience and, therefore, requires the same safeguards that we use at the level of press, radio and film.*

## **GENERAL SOCIAL NETWORKING WEB SITES**

MySpace, Facebook and other social networking Web sites 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.

As long as individuals do not identify themselves as A.A. members, there is no conflict of interest. However, someone 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 not to disclose A.A. membership on social networking sites as well as on any other Web site, blog, electronic bulletin board, etc., that is not composed solely of A.A. members, is not password protected or is accessible to the public.

## **POSTING SERVICE MINUTES AND REPORTS**

Deciding what contents to post on public Web sites requires careful consideration. As it is helpful when Web sites 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 e-mail 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 Web site. 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 and General Service Office staff members

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 Web site meant for A.A. members only. This will be up to the informed group conscience to decide.

## **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 Web master 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 Web site, may choose to leave out other details of their lives that may make themselves or their families identifiable.

## **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 Web sites, 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 e-mail address.

## **ANONYMITY AND E-MAIL**

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 e-mail it is necessary to consider the anonymity of the recipients of messages. Sending messages to multiple recipients that disclose the e-mail 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 e-mail 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.

## **USING FULL NAMES IN E-MAILS TO PROFESSIONALS**



It is suggested that e-mail communication with professionals is similar to a letter-mailing project with two caveats:

- 1) e-mails can easily be forwarded, and
- 2) the contents of e-mails can easily be cut-and-pasted, changed and/or uploaded to Web sites.
- 3) 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 e-mail if a full name is used and if the letter or e-mail has a professional look and feel. The Public Information coordinator at the New York G.S.O. responds to e-mail and letter requests from the media with the following signature:

Sincerely,

John Doe (name not for publication)

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 e-mail 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 e-mail 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 e-mail address books used for A.A. correspondence on a home personal computer, Macintosh, laptop, PDA, Blackberry, etc., may be available to friends and family if more than one person uses the device.

## **E-MAIL IN A.A.— ACCESS, ADDRESSES AND ROTATION**

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

For A.A. service positions, generic e-mail addresses can be passed from one trusted servant to another at rotation time. For example, the sample e-mail address and account for “delegate@area\_e\_easternregion.com.au” could, upon rotation, be passed on, maintaining the e-mail address identity for the position, one rotation to the next.

## **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 e-mail messages for A.A. service, i.e., e-mail "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 e-mail communication and spam. Instead, the committee could discuss the possibility of sending A.A. correspondence to a small number of recipients or sending personalized e-mails one at a time. E-mails 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 General Service Office's A.A. Web site. ([www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au))

## **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 General 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.

## GUIDELINE NO GL-33

# SUGGESTIONS FOR MEMBERS WISHING TO VISIT TREATMENT FACILITIES

## Why do AA Members go into Treatment Facilities ?

**One of the purposes of detoxification and rehabilitation is to afford alcoholics an opportunity to turn their lives around. By addressing any underlying problem of alcoholism, Alcoholics Anonymous has sustained a record for over seventy-five years as an effective option for many alcoholics.**

For members of AA, visiting sick alcoholics where they are has long been one of the important and happiest ways of keeping ourselves sober. The book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, includes a chapter on 'Working with Others' which states: *"Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail."* Later in the chapter it concludes that *"Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery."*

Our AA Fellowship encapsulates this policy in its banner displayed at many AA meetings: *When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there - and for that I am responsible.*

All members have to do in treatment facilities is to be channels for the AA message. Everyone has a story to share in treatment facilities because patients are as varied as AA members; you don't have to have been in a detox or rehab yourself.

Not only are we doing our Twelfth Step and making ourselves useful in recovery (as the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* talks about), it also gives us that 'sense of belonging' we often lack as practising alcoholics. It also lets sober alcoholics see what could happen to them if they drink again. However, most important of all, it's the change we witness in newcomers that motivates us to carry the AA message.

## HOW TO VOLUNTEER:

Members have sometimes found service in treatment facilities to be a challenging experience. However, if you believe it would be personally rewarding, firstly, find out when the meetings are held at the treatment facility convenient to your location. If you

are available on those days and times, contact the National Treatment Facilities Coordinator through General Service Office at [www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au) or [gso@aa.org.au](mailto:gso@aa.org.au) or 02 9599 8866.

If AA meetings are not held in a treatment centre in your area, the brochure *AA in Treatment Facilities* can guide you towards starting one. The AA members who coordinate carrying the message in treatment facilities in your AA District or Area can also assist.

## ADMISSION

The superintendent of a treatment facility sets the terms under which AA visits can be made. In addition, AA visitors are subject to facility rules that apply to every visitor.

Patients will not hesitate to complain if an AA visitor who is supposed to be there to help them fails to meet standards of behaviour or seems to be wasting their time. To protect your sobriety and AA's reputation, you should satisfy most of the following general conditions:

- Some good sobriety (say, a minimum of two continuous years to date)
- Personal experience of alcoholism and Twelve Step recovery
- Broad knowledge of AA and ability to stick to AA's business of recovery
- Dependability, including being known as an active member of a home Group of AA
- A common sense approach learned from being a sponsor
- Experience of doing Twelfth Step calls
- Ability to follow directions
- A long-term commitment to visiting the facility.

Finally, the long-standing practice in AA is for at least two members to do Twelfth Step calls together. This equally applies in treatment facilities; there is safety in numbers and you will have a witness in case anything should ever happen.

## BANNED ITEMS

It is your responsibility to find out what you are permitted to take into the treatment facility, including any local rules that apply at the centre. For example, ask if the facility will permit you to take in AA cloth banners of the Steps and Traditions for the meeting.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

AA members are guests in treatment facilities. Cooperation with professional staff is a pre-requisite for carrying the message to patients. Your fellow members want to ensure the Fellowship is always welcome so please be polite and respectful to everyone.

AA is a program of attraction: remember that you represent AA to people in that facility; you are being judged as an example of sobriety. Your language, appearance, manners and mood all affect other people's opinions of our Fellowship. We already know that AA works—let our new friends see, hear and talk to a winner and make sure your behaviour brings credit to AA.

You may encounter professional staff who think AA is a waste of time. You should not try to impress them, but we need to keep on side by keeping our minds on the alcoholics who still suffer, now and in the future: thoughtless words or actions can instantly undo prolonged efforts to establish AA in a facility.

Here is a checklist of dos and don'ts derived from the experience of those who have visited treatment facilities before you:

### DO

- Abide carefully by all the rules of the facility. The reasons for their rules may not seem clear to us, but it is not up to us to question them
- Wear clean, neat clothes and dress as though you are proud to be sober
- Be reliable and arrive before the appointed time so staff have time to check you in
- Smoke only in any area provided if you are able to bring in cigarettes and matches
- Make sure any undertaking you make is kept

### DON'T

- Do not take anything in for the patients apart from printed or recorded AA materials.
- Do not swear
- Do not give professional staff or patients any reason to be uncomfortable about AA.
- Do not argue about anything with either patients or staff: disagreement never wins friends
- Do not try to claim special exemptions or privileges or attempt to manipulate the facility into making concessions
- Do not expect professional staff to govern themselves by AA's Traditions
- Do not make a commitment unless you personally are going to keep it; excuses do not speak well for AA, but faithfulness and results do

- Do not make claims about our Twelve Steps, but we can speak of their effectiveness for us.

## THE AA MEETING

If possible, put up the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and clichés banners before the meeting starts and display some AA literature.

## OPENING REMARKS

- Read the AA Preamble. Tell the patients that AA started in 1934 and there are over 1,900 meetings every week across Australia—which all function just like the ones in treatment facilities.
- Explain that AA's single purpose is to help alcoholics. However, remember that people in detoxes and rehabs often have complex histories of addiction and patients who more fully identify with other Twelve Step programs may be at the AA meeting because it is their only option.
- Read the Anonymity Desk Card (*'What you hear here...'*). Explain that we remain anonymous in the media so that alcoholics will not be deterred from seeking help because they fear public disclosure.
- Point out that sharing is encouraged but not required.

## SHARING

If you are asked to share, identify as an alcoholic and make it clear that you choose not to drink alcohol or use any mood altering substances that are not prescribed.

The audience is more interested in learning how to stay sober than in hearing how you got drunk. Get to the point that will help them. Without using AA jargon, talk to them in a straightforward way: tell it like it was for you: not what you guess they might like to hear.

Leave them in no doubt that you:

- d) are a fellow alcoholic. Focus on your drinking pattern (rather than specific graphic descriptions); maybe mention the loneliness, hopelessness and fears; or talk about the mental obsession and physical allergy;
- e) came to a turning point; tell how you came to ask for help, referring to Step One; and,
- f) stay sober using AA's program of recovery with the Twelve Steps. Let them know how different life is thanks to AA and perhaps explain why you are there.

**It is always useful to reinforce these AA suggestions:**

- Stay away from the first drink
- Live one day at a time
- Read the literature such as the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous*; *Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions*; and, *Living Sober*
- Go to meetings regularly and try to put into practice what we learn there
- Get a sponsor who has made some progress in the recovery program
- Join a home Group where you feel a sense of belonging.

At some stage during the meeting, read ‘*How It Works*’ from Chapter 5 of *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

## QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

If there are newcomers or observers, it may be helpful to open the floor at the end of sharing for questions about AA. You can also expect to interrupt the meeting if an patient asks a question when they hear something they do not understand.

Be ready for basic questions such as:

- How do I do the Steps in a treatment facility?
- **How do I get a sponsor?**
- **Isn't this a waste of time if you're an alcoholic with a history like mine?**
- **Why do I have to give up alcohol completely?**
- Can we run our own meeting without visitors?
- Will I be welcome in AA meetings when I get out?

Give simple, straightforward answers...but make sure you answer the question. You can say: ‘*I don't know, but I will try to find out.*’ For questions that are not about AA, such as the merits of other recovery options, it is best to say that AA has no opinion.

In preparing ourselves for possible questions, it helps to be clear in our minds what AA represents to patients (or professional staff). Some possible answers are attached to this Guideline about what AA is trying to achieve in treatment facilities...and what it does not do. You may wish to read out these answers about AA to the patients, or hand out a printed copy.

## AFTER THE MEETING

Thank everyone, including any professional staff, for their time and attention.

When talking one-on-one to newcomers or observers:

- Listen as much as you talk
- Always maintain a cheerful humility about how AA works
- Limit yourself to carrying your own honest message of recovery from alcoholism
- Do not brag about AA; rather, let results speak for us
- Remember that medication, psychiatry, or scientific theories of alcoholism are the business of professionals; we are not authorities on alcoholism. Similarly, our spiritual life does not make us experts on religion
- Let the patients know about the benefits of sponsorship
- Show you can laugh at yourself
- Give out the AA Helpline number, not private numbers.

## PRE-RELEASE

Professional staff sometimes like to view AA as a source of peer-based mentoring for people in transition from an institution to living in the community. At the very least, we can provide a card to patients with the local AA Helpline number and [www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au) so they can promptly get to meetings and make contact with local members. If you definitely know a reliable member will be available, offer for AA to escort them to their first meeting outside and exchange contact details for the patient.

If the patient will be moving to another part of Australia after release, provide contact details in other Areas. The National Treatment Facility Coordinator may be able to assist with this—contact General Service Office at [www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au) or [gso@aa.org.au](mailto:gso@aa.org.au) or 02 9599 8866.



## ATTACHMENT A

### USEFUL RESOURCES

#### FOR THE INMATE

Carry a range of simple, inexpensive AA literature that requires minimal reading. Don't load patients up with too much confusing information; they will ask for more if they want it. Likewise, the Little Big Book is often more welcome than the full-sized *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Some patients have reading difficulties so CDs are often welcome. If there are Aboriginal patients, source the tapes from the National Aboriginal Conventions.

Relevant reading material includes:

- Regional AA journals, especially editions that have stories involving time in prison: Mainstay; Messages of Hope; Pathfinder; Serenity; The News; and, The Reviver.
- Just for Today card
- Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions card
- 44 Questions
- A Brief Guide to AA
- A Message to Teenagers
- A Newcomer Asks
- AA & the Armed Services
- AA & the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic
- AA at a Glance
- AA for the Aboriginal Woman
- AA for the Indigenous Australian
- AA for the Older Alcoholic
- AA for the Woman
- Alcoholism: local AA may be able to help
- Are You Sick of Being Charged (for Aborigines)
- Do You Think You're Different
- 'How It Works' from Chapter 5 of *Alcoholics Anonymous*
- Is AA for Me
- Is AA for You
- Making a Start in AA
- Questions & Answers on Sponsorship
- The Twelve Steps (Illustrated)
- This is AA
- Understanding Anonymity
- Where do I go from here?
- Young People & AA

## **FOR THE AA SPEAKER**

- AA in Treatment Facilities
- Speaking at non-AA Meetings
- Problems Other than Alcohol
- How AA Members Co-operate with Professionals
- Australian AA Service Manual (from [www.aaservice.org.au](http://www.aaservice.org.au))
- AA Guidelines (from [www.aaservice.org.au](http://www.aaservice.org.au))

# ATTACHMENT B

## WHAT IS AA?

AA is a community-based option formed by alcoholics to help each other get and stay sober. We are a social movement based on a set of principles learnt from experience. There is no conflict between our approach and other options. However, we can vouch for good results amongst those who thoroughly follow AA's path even though our program is not amenable to research, especially in the short term.

The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no fees for AA membership or services.

Members remain anonymous but AA should be visible. However, AA's public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion.

AA is a worldwide non-profit fellowship of local groups that has been established in Australia since 1945.

AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution. It is not a religious organisation, but the word God is used to reflect the belief amongst members that a higher power rather than willpower has helped us find a solution to our drinking problem. AA does not wish to engage in any controversy so it does not endorse or oppose any cause.

## WHAT AA DOES

AA's basic philosophy is that one alcoholic can help another. AA members share their experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem; they give person-to-person 'sponsorship' to the alcoholic coming to AA from any source.

Our Twelve Step program offers the alcoholic a way to a satisfying life without alcohol. This program is discussed at AA meetings. In order to keep our sobriety, we try to give the program to other still-suffering alcoholics: that's why we're visiting the treatment facility.

## WHAT AA DOES NOT DO

- tell anyone that they're an alcoholic – that's for them to decide
- seek or accept contributions from non-members or any outside organisation
- keep any records of its membership
- define 'alcoholism' or profess any profound knowledge of its cause or 'cure'
- have any opinion on public policy or practices regarding what some professionals term 'alcohol dependence and abuse'
- compete with other treatments or get into debates about evidence for or against various treatment options—we are not professionals
- solicit members, make diagnoses or offer advice
- give initial motivation for alcoholics to recover
- provide drying out, professional treatment or other welfare services
- provide references for any purpose
- educate about alcohol or engage in its own research
- join councils or social agencies
- follow-up or try to control its members
- promise anything beyond the promises of sobriety set out in the Big Book.

## GUIDELINE NO GL-34

# AA CHILD SAFE GUIDELINE

### Preamble:

Child safety is a society wide responsibility. It is important for AA members to be aware that when they are working with children and young people, they share in this responsibility.

The various State laws and “mission statements” of the major organizations set up to deal with the issues of child abuse and neglect, set out in general terms that *it is every child’s right to feel safe and secure*. From this premise, we can say that any child/young person attending an AA event or meeting should feel secure in the knowledge that all members present at that meeting have a responsibility to ensure that this basic principle is upheld.

This is not to say that all AA members are acting “*in loco parentis*”, that is, *taking the responsibility of the parent*, but all members working with Children and young people, or who are present at an activity which includes young children, have a duty of care to ensure that any children present will be reasonably safe in attending or participating in that activity. This can be a difficult and at times complex responsibility, however by using some straightforward commonsense practices and procedures, we can all make a contribution to good practice whenever children are present.

It is important to remember that much of the work undertaken within schools by AA members will require members to comply with a particular Schools’ Child Protection Policy. For some schools and in some States, [depending on how regularly the AA activity is undertaken], the members may be asked to undergo a National Criminal History records check. [Crimtrac]. Details on how this check is undertaken vary from state to state. **For example**, in Queensland, any person working on a regular basis as a volunteer in schools must obtain a **Blue Card**.

### Setting up an AA program which involves children and young people:

If an AA group is:-

- Considering setting up an education program for young people,
- Running programs for children who attend meetings with their parents;
- Or who have people under eighteen attending meeting;
- Running events for young people;

It is important to assess the risks that may be faced in the activity, and the suitability of the people who volunteer to help. The group should undertake a simple assessment of the suitability of the person to undertake the intended role.

A person’s criminal history does not necessarily exclude people from working with young people unless that offence suggests that there is a risk of inappropriate behaviour. Before setting up a program it is important to find out what laws operate in

your State in regard to reporting child abuse, and how to go about reporting it, if required.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT:**

### **AA Australia; Code of Conduct for working with Children and Young people:**

- Members of Alcoholics Anonymous should never allow themselves to remain alone with anyone under eighteen years of age, who has come to AA for help. They should seek another adult person to be with them.
- Public Information speakers should always work with another adult member who understands that when any minor is present both speakers will remain together.
- In meetings where children are present, welcome them and include them in activities where appropriate but always ensure that they are not left alone or with only one adult. This protects both the children and the AA members.
- Always conduct yourself in a manner consistent with AA traditions and provide a positive role model for children and other people involved in the program.
- In the messages that you convey and the activities that you organize or in which you participate with young people, use language and ways of relating that affirm the worth, dignity and rights of children, and reflect well on AA.
- Treat children and young people with respect, listen to and value their ideas and opinions. Respect cultural, religious and other differences.
- Carefully plan all activities involving children to ensure that they are appropriate to the child's safety and development.
- Respect the privacy of children and their families and only disclose any information that you may gain during an event, to those who have a need to know.
- Help newcomers to AA to gain a clear understanding about what AA is, what AA does, and does and what it does not do.
- Ensure that all people working with you on an event where young people are present, are aware of, have read and are prepared to act within the AA child safety guidelines. They should also have complied with any State or Commonwealth laws in relation to child safety and protection.
- When working with other AA groups or outside organizations, make yourself aware of their policies or guidelines on Child protection. If they don't have one, advise them of the AA guideline.

- Groups should support members involved in AA Service, including Twelve Step calls and speaking in Schools and Youth Centres, but only to the extent that AA Volunteers are carrying the AA message.
- Follow the Child safety guideline of AA and report or act on any breaches.

**National Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800**

**State and Territory Child Abuse Reporting Phone Numbers:**

**NSW: 13211.**

NSW Community Services.

**Australian Capital Territory:  
1300 556 728, or  
1300 556 729**

**Northern Territory: 1800 700 250.**

Child Abuse Prevention Unit.

**Queensland: 07 3235 9999.**

Queensland Government.

**South Australia: 131478.**

Child Abuse Prevention Unit.

**Tasmania: 1300 737639.**

Tasmanian Government.

**Victoria: 13128.**

Department of Human services.

**Western Australia: 9492 4444.**

W.A. Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit.





## GUIDELINE NO GL-35

# REMOTE COMMUNITIES

**The Remote Communities initiative is an effort to carry the AA message to people living in geographically remote communities in Australia. This initiative enables us to fulfil the Declaration of Responsibility adopted in 1965: 'I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible!'**

## THE COORDINATORS

The Remote Communities Committee is made up of a National Coordinator and a network of Regional Coordinators, one for each AA Region in Australia. The term of the appointments is four years.

Appointment of National Coordinator is made by the Chairperson of the Trustees' Remote Communities Committee and ratified by the General Service Board. The National Coordinator reports to the General Service Conference.

Regional Coordinators are appointed by the Chairperson of the Trustees' Remote Communities Committee and report to the National Coordinator.

Application forms for National and Regional Coordinator positions are available from GSO.

## SUGGESTED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE FOR ALL COORDINATORS

- Available time
- Basic computer literacy & regular computer access
- Knowledge and experience in AA Service
- Understanding of General and Central Service structures.
- Familiarity with AA Service literature.
- Experience in service other than at group level
- Experience in PI&CPC would be most helpful

## THE ROLES

National Coordinators are asked:

- To actively encourage and promote the growth of Remote Communities initiatives nationwide, reporting in several directions, such as in writing, email, the Service website, displays and National Forums.

- To make maximum use of modern communication tools, especially the Service website, with the assistance of the Webmaster. □
- To be in regular contact with the Regional Coordinators and the Chairperson of the Trustees' Remote Communities Committee in order to facilitate service opportunities.
- To liaise with the Board and General Service Office in implementing national scale projects.

The National Coordinator may claim up to \$1000.00 per annum to cover expenses incurred in carrying out the duties for which he/she was appointed. The allowance is paid from the Remote Communities Fund.

Regional Coordinators are asked to:

- Provide information to members about Remote Communities and how they can assist in carrying the message.
- Persuade interested members to form a committee and encourage Districts/Areas to include Remote Communities Reports at Assemblies.
- Write reports and articles on Remote Communities through a variety of media such as AA newsletters and AA service website.
- Encourage the Fellowship to provide funds to carry the message.
- Identify resources and strategies that will assist in carrying the message to isolated communities.
- Assist the National Coordinator with organising a Remote Communities Forum.

## FUNDING OF REMOTE COMMUNITIES ACTIVITIES

The Remote Communities Fund was set up in 2013, in response to a Conference Resolution 'to accept the General Service Board recommendation "...that a sponsorship fund be set up to assist in carrying the message to remote communities within Australia..."'.

As per Conference Resolution SPONSORSHIP FUND 1-7/13: Applications for funding are made to the Administrators of the Remote Communities Fund, i.e., the Chairperson of the Trustees' Remote Communities Committee, the Chairperson of the Conference Remote Communities Committee and the General Service Office Manager. The administration of the Remote Communities Fund is at the discretion of these Administrators.

The funds are obtained nationally, so preference will be given to projects that benefit all regions; e.g., producing more resource material aimed at indigenous Australians, especially DVDs.

With regard to pamphlets and literature needed for Remote Communities initiatives in a particular Region, it is reasonable for the Coordinator to request funds from the Areas within the region, since there is an overlap here with PI&CPC work.

GUIDELINE NO. GL- 36

## AA GUIDELINE FOR INTERNET USE

The AA Guideline below is compiled from the experience of AA members in the various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the *Twelve Traditions* and the Australian and the US/Canada General Service Conferences.

- We recommend that all members engaging in Social Media sites such as Facebook / Twitter / Instagram / Reddit etc check their privacy and security settings to ensure that only the people they want to allow access to their information are enabled.
- Please be aware that most social media sites require personal identification information to ensure that you are who you say you are.
- AA' Face Book groups. To protect privacy of members they should be Secret Groups where members can only see who is in the Group and join up by invitation. They are unable to be found by search function.
- When adding posts or commenting on public social media sites, members should keep in mind our 11th Tradition.
- Please respect other people's anonymity by (a) not publishing photographs taken at an AA event (unless you gain their permission first) (b) not referring to AA in any comments
- There are others such as "Reddit" which do not require that information.
- When sending out AA related emails to distribution lists please be considerate of other AA members confidentiality and use the Blind Carbon Copy address field to protect members identity.
- Have a note added to the pamphlets on Anonymity and Sponsorship to the effect that perhaps sponsors could point out to new members that our Anonymity is a valuable asset.
- Promote the use of our pamphlets on Anonymity.
- Promote the use of the FRAGILE ANONYMITY Poster.





## GUIDELINE NO. GL- 37

# AA GUIDELINE FOR MINORITY REPORTS

**The following Minority Report Guidelines are adopted from the US/Canada General Service Conference and have been approved for use in Australia:**

1. The minority, expressing a feeling or opinion in light of the right of appeal to the General Service Conference, has been very rare. It is hoped that an individual entitled under Concept V to appeal would exhaust every avenue offered within the General Service Conference structure prior to making an appeal to the General Service Conference.
2. All Conference members are entitled to appeal to the General Service Conference.
3. The minority should announce, in writing, to the chair of the General Service Board, the Chair of the Conference Agenda Committee and to the General Service Office Conference Coordinator that it intends to appeal under Concept V to the General Service Conference.
4. All Conference members will be given notice through the General Service Office of the minority's decision to file an appeal.
5. Appeals under Concept V, including any minority report and background, should be submitted in writing 30 days prior to the General Service Conference in order for these materials to be distributed to Conference members. The G.S.O. Conference Coordinator will be responsible for seeing that this material is made available to all Conference members within 10 business days after its receipt.
6. The minority's appeal will be presented before the start of deliberation on Committee Reports:
  - The minority will be given a maximum of ten minutes to present their appeal. • The majority will then be given a maximum of ten minutes to present their position.
7. The discretion to debate a minority's appeal rests with the Conference body.  
The chair will ask if there is a motion to decline to debate the minority's appeal. A motion to decline to debate a minority's appeal:
  - Must be made without comment. • Needs a second. • Is not debatable. • Requires a two thirds majority.
8. If the Conference decides to debate the appeal, it then takes the form of a motion which does not require a second. If passed by substantial unanimity, it becomes an advisory action.
9. Whether or not an appeal is debated, a summary of the minority's report and the disposition of the appeal will be published in the Final Conference Report.

### 2012 Additional Committee Considerations:

- The committee considered modifying the procedure for the submission of Concept V minority appeals to the General Service Conference and took no action. They agreed that the policy approved by the 2011 General Service Conference sufficiently provides a process for the "Right of Appeal" as described in Concept V — the procedure allows for a "well-heard minority" to be a "chief protection against an uninformed, misinformed, hasty or angry majority," and it makes the "best possible use of minority feeling and opinion."