

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.