

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.