

Safety and A.A. flyer

A.A. groups are made up of alcoholics who gather for the sole purpose of staying sober and helping other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

Safety is a topic within A.A. that groups and members may need to address to help ensure the ability to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Our Twelve Traditions provide a set of principles to help guide us, and the additional shared experience pertaining specifically to safety provided in this service piece may be helpful if challenges arise at in-person or virtual settings.

A.A. membership does not include having to tolerate sexual harassment, threats of violence, financial coercion, or bullying. Nor is pressuring A.A. members into a particular point of view or belief relating to medications, religion and other outside issues acceptable.

No one should have to tolerate racial, sexual orientation, gender, age or other discrimination when they seek help from A.A.

Keep in mind:

While most groups operate with a healthy balance of spontaneity and structure, there are a number of situations that can threaten group unity and challenge the safety of the group and its members.

- Unwanted sexual advances and predatory behaviors are in conflict with carrying the A.A. message of recovery.
- There may be other behaviors that go on outside of typical meeting times that may affect whether someone feels safe to return to the group.
- As reflected in A.A.'s Tradition Three (Long Form), "Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover." However, an A.A. group could ask someone to stop attending their meetings if the person is disruptive and prevents the group from carrying the message. *No A.A. entity proposes to bar any individual from membership in Alcoholics Anonymous.*
- Calling the proper authorities *does not* go against A.A. Traditions. Anonymity is not a cloak protecting criminal behavior. Any conduct within an A.A. meeting is subject to the same laws that apply outside the meeting.
- Involvement in any business ventures, investments, loans, employment and/or any services offered in exchange for any fees is outside of the purpose of an A.A. group. If these activities do

occur, they should take place with the clear understanding that these activities are outside of A.A.

- The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking; therefore, groups strive to create a warm and welcoming environment to the alcoholic who has not yet stopped drinking.

Samples of statements on safety:

Groups determine the formats of their meetings reflecting their needs, experience and group conscience. Below are a few examples of language used by some A.A. groups as part of their introductory announcements in their efforts to create a safe meeting place. Please feel free to select or adapt any text from this flyer that fits your group's needs.

- *Our group strives to create a safe meeting environment where alcoholics can focus on gaining and maintaining sobriety.*
- *As our Traditions remind us, despite personal differences, our common welfare is critical and comes first. Therefore, we ask that group members and others refrain from any behavior that might compromise another person's welfare, safety, or ability to participate in the group.*
- *This group welcomes all those seeking help with a drinking problem. A.A. is inclusive, never exclusive.*
- *Those who experience any harassment that makes it difficult to receive the A.A. message of recovery can feel free to let the group know about such situations and can, of course, take appropriate action.*
- *We respect and protect your anonymity; however, all in attendance should be aware that our principle of anonymity does not mean that an A.A. member cannot or should not contact the appropriate authorities if they are subjected to or learn about illegal behavior by another A.A. member.*
- *Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.*
- *So that our group can carry out our meeting, please keep in mind that disruptive behavior is not tolerated. This group defines disruptive behavior as [insert examples].*

Some suggestions:

- In discussions about safety, keep the focus on our primary purpose, our common welfare, and placing principles before personalities.
- Communicate clearly what A.A. is and what it is not.
- To raise awareness about safety concerns, discuss the topic at group conscience meetings, service workshops, and, when appropriate, with a sponsor.
- Consider developing group guidelines and procedures on safety.
- Consider including safety as a topic for a group inventory.
- If concerns arise, speak with a sponsor, trusted friend and/or a professional to address the concern.
- Contact your District Committee Member (D.C.M.) or Area Delegate for local shared experience.

Emergencies:

Accidents, medical emergencies, fires, etc., sometimes do occur during meetings. To prepare for these situations, groups can develop plans and procedures, often in consultation with their landlord or local authorities. Addressing an emergency situation is more important than continuing the meeting, and members should not hesitate to call emergency personnel in critical situations. It is suggested that groups and members with health and safety questions contact national, state/provincial and local health authorities for appropriate information.

Safety and A.A. in the digital age

The Internet and social media platforms have greatly impacted how A.A. members interact with each other and with potential members. Relating to safety, the principles that apply to “in person” A.A. settings also apply to A.A. phone, online, and social media settings.

Related A.A. resources: www.aa.org

- A.A.'s Twelve Traditions
- The service piece "Safety and A.A.: Our Common Welfare" (SMF-209)
- "Safety Card for A.A. Groups" (F-211)
- Service material "Information on A.A." (F-2)
- A.A. pamphlet "The A.A. Group... Where It All Begins" (P-16)
- A.A. pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship" (P-15)
- A.A. pamphlet "Frequently Asked Questions About A.A." (P-2)
- "The A.A. Member — Medications and Other Drugs" (P-11)

As embodied in the Fourth Tradition, the formation and operation of an A.A. group resides with the group conscience of its members. It is through an informed group conscience that A.A. groups find their solutions to group problems. Service entities such as areas, districts and intergroup/central offices are available to help provide *A.A. services and shared experience*. All groups and entities in A.A. are autonomous. There is no government within A.A. and no central authority to control or direct its members, but we do share our experience, strength and hope.

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www.aa.org