

PUBLIC INFORMATION VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION LESSON PLAN

EXPRESS GRATITUDE TO VOLUNTEERS FOR DOING THIS SERVICE AND ENCOURAGE VOLUNTEERS TO TELL FELLOW A.A.S ABOUT THIS SERVICE AND MAKE AN “A.A. RELATED ANNOUNCEMENT” AT MEETINGS THEY ATTEND.

THE PURPOSE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION (“PI”) SERVICE

- provide accurate *A.A. information* to the public when requested;
- visit schools, businesses and community meetings for this purpose;¹

WHY MUST PI VOLUNTEERS ATTEND AN ORIENTATION SESSION?

1. P.I. volunteers “are A.A.’s who have *specific responsibility for keeping the public accurately informed about A.A.*”²
2. From the A.A. Guidelines for Public Information:
It is essential that participating A.A.s agree on the basic outline for the visit, and are familiar with details in *Speaking at Non-A.A. Meetings* and *Understanding Anonymity*.
3. From G.S.O.’s Public Information Workbook:
*Be sure that the person who represents A.A. is knowledgeable about the Traditions and Steps, and can converse in an intelligent and articulate manner. It is important that the representative be able to field questions about A.A. accurately, and remain level-headed.*³

RESPONDING TO A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION BY A PUBLIC ENTITY IS NOT AN A.A. MEETING AND IS NOT CONDUCTED LIKE ONE. THUS, THIS ORIENTATION WAS WRITTEN TO:

- assist PI volunteers by informing them of what is expected of them and give them the tools and information to complete the service;
- substantially increase the number of A.A.s available for PI service in the New York City area;
- give consistency to New York Inter-groups P.I. presentations (i.e.: assure that the message delivered is the same regardless of the messenger).

A FEW POINTS FOR A P.I. VOLUNTEER TO REMEMBER

- A.A. is concerned solely with the personal recovery and continued sobriety of individual alcoholics . . . and **does not engage in the fields of alcoholism research, medical or**

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² Reprinted from *How AA Members Cooperate with Other Community Efforts to Help Alcoholics*, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

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psychiatric treatment, education, or propaganda in any form, although members may participate in such activities as individuals.⁴

- The Fellowship has adopted a **policy of ‘cooperation but not affiliation’** with other organizations concerned with the problem of alcoholism.⁵
- Traditionally, A.A. **does not accept or seek financial support** from outside sources, and members preserve personal anonymity in print and broadcast media and otherwise at the public level.⁶
- A.A. experience has always been made available freely to all who sought it . . . but A.A. **never endorses, supports, becomes affiliated with or express an opinion** on the programs of others in the field of alcoholism, since such actions would be beyond the scope of the Fellowship’s primary purpose.⁷
- “*We are not authorities on the whole field of Alcoholism.* We share our recovery program, but we are not professionals. **We have no official definition of alcoholism.** Although we are victims of the illness, we have no profound knowledge of its cause or “cure.”⁸

UNDERSTANDING OF THE 12 TRADITIONS IS ESSENTIAL FOR P.I. VOLUNTEERS

“An understanding of all the Traditions and a firm grasp of the anonymity Traditions are *especially vital*. The pamphlet *Understanding Anonymity* and the *Anonymity Wallet Card* are useful in making the A.A. anonymity principle clear to the public.”⁹

“Thoughtful reading of A.A. literature . . . is essential for anyone who works with non-A.A.s. . . . and Traditions Six, Eight, Eleven and Twelve are directly related to it.”¹⁰

Tradition Six

An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

From the 12 and 12:

Recovery from alcoholism gave many members the desire to share our way of life with *everyone*. A.A.’s thought that:

- a. the 12 Steps could be the answer to other problems
- b. bringing the 12 Steps to other causes: laborer and capitalist; politics (making politicians honest); religion & medicine would be “*the spearhead of a new spiritual advance!*”

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⁸ Reprinted from *Public Information Workbook*, page 10, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

⁹ Reprinted from *Public Information Workbook*, page 9, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

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AA tried to do these things and associated itself with hospitals and education facilities, and some members even “began to publicly whoop up the merits of this or that brand . . .” These adventures began to **confuse the public about what A.A. is and what it does.** “Did A.A. fix drunks or was it an educational project? Was A.A. spiritual or was it medical? Was it a reform movement? In consternation, we saw ourselves getting married to all kinds of enterprises, some good and some not so good?”¹¹

“These adventures implanted a deep-rooted conviction that in no circumstances could we endorse any related enterprise, no matter how good. We of Alcoholics Anonymous could not be all things to all men, nor should we try.”¹²

Tradition Eight

Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

From the 12 and 12:

- We do not decry professionalism in other fields, but we accept that sober fact that it does not work for us.
- Every time we have tried to professionalize our Twelfth Step, the result has been exactly the same: Our single purpose has been defeated.
- Alcoholics simply will not listen to a paid twelfth-stepper.¹³
- Caretakers who swept floors, cooks, secretaries in offices, authors writing books are NOT DOING 12 STEP WORK. They “are often doing thankless tasks that no one else could or would do.”¹⁴

“The job was not to do Twelfth Step work; it was to make Twelfth Step work possible. It as a service proposition, pure and simple.”¹⁵

“Our Twelfth Step is never to be paid for, but those who labor in service for us are worthy of their hire.”¹⁶

Mistaking An Anonymity Break For “Professionalism”

- using the name Alcoholic Anonymous for publicity or money-raising purposes or
- breaking anonymity to thump the tub for a pet enterprise.¹⁷

¹¹ *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 156, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

¹² *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 157, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

¹³ *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 166, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

¹⁴ *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 167, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

¹⁵ *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 168, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

¹⁶ *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 171, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

¹⁷ *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 170, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

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Tradition 11

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.

From the 12 and 12

- Throughout the world, immense and favorable publicity of every description has been the principal means of bringing alcoholics into our Fellowship.
- Therefore a great responsibility fell upon us to develop the best possible public relations policy for A.A. – *The principle of attraction rather than of promotion!*
- Why? We have to soberly face the fact that being in the public eye is hazardous, especially for us as we are by nature, promoters.
- Obviously, A.A. had to be publicized somehow, so we resorted to the idea *that it would be far better to let our friends do this for us.*
- Why our insistence upon anonymity? *Because we are a society that wished to publicize our principles and work, but not our individual members.*
- This Tradition is a constant and practical reminder that personal ambition has no place in A.A. In it, *each member becomes an active guardian of our Fellowship.*

Tradition 12

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

From the 12 and 12

- *The spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice.*
- The Traditions repeatedly ask us to *give up personal desires for the common good;*
- The sacrificial spirit –well symbolized by *anonymity—is the foundation of them all* [the traditions].
- How anonymous should an A.A. member be?
- We simply couldn't afford to take the chance of letting self-appointed members present themselves as messiah's representing A.A. before the whole public.
- If even one publicly got drunk, or was lured into using A.A.'s name for his own purposes, the damage might be irreparable. At this altitude . . . anonymity –100 percent anonymity—was the only possible answer. *Here, principles would have to come before personalities, without exception.*
- *Anonymity is real humility at work* – it is an all-pervading spiritual quality which today keynotes A.A. life everywhere.
- Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as A.A. members both among fellow alcoholics and before the general public.
- We are sure that *humility, expressed by anonymity, is the greatest safeguard that A.A. can ever have.*

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REMEMBER

- Open by describing the need for personal anonymity at the public level; give your first name and A.A. membership.¹⁸
- Avoid drunk-a-logs, keep you're A.A. story general and brief. Use humor with good taste; what's funny to A.A.s may not be laughable to nonmembers.¹⁹
- Confine your comments to A.A. information; remember that we're not experts when speaking as A.A. members. *We don't speak for A.A. as a whole.*²⁰
- As nonprofessionals, we do not give *any information* concerning the general subject of alcoholism.²¹
- If appropriate, offer A.A. literature²²
- You may be the only A.A. member that somebody in the audience may ever meet. Therefore, it is up to the P.I. Volunteer to present as attractive a picture of our Fellowship as possible. Thus:
 - **AVOID USE OF PROFANITY**
 - **DRESS NEATLY AND AS WELL AS YOU CAN**
 - **BE EARLY NOT 'JUST ON TIME'**

THANK YOU FOR DOING THIS ESSENTIAL TWELFTH STEP WORK.

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²⁰ Reprinted from A.A. *Guidelines Public Information*, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

²¹ Reprinted from A.A. *Guidelines Public Information*, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

²² Reprinted from A.A. *Guidelines Public Information*, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc. For a list of Basic P.I. Literature see: A.A. *Guidelines Public Information*.