

Corrections WORKBOOK

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This workbook is service material, reflecting A.A. experience shared at the General Service Office. A.A. workbooks are compiled from the practical experience of A.A. members in the various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. & Canada).

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www.aa.org/corrections-committees

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Note: all referenced literature throughout this workbook is also available in Spanish and French.

Introduction

This Corrections Workbook is designed to help A.A.s who are involved in corrections work to form effective corrections committees in their areas. If your area already has a functioning committee, this workbook may provide new ideas or new ways of implementing existing ideas.

The Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous was in its seventh year when a pioneering warden at San Quentin asked nearby A.A.s to carry the message to alcoholics in the prison. The year was 1942—the warden was Clinton Duffy. He was heard to say, “If the A.A. program will help just one man, I want to start it.” Today there are hundreds of A.A. groups behind the walls, as well as corrections committees serving them.

In 1977, the General Service Conference recommended that the Institutions Committee be dissolved and two new committees—one dealing with Corrections, and one with Treatment Facilities—be formed. The 1983 General Service Conference recommended that a Corrections Workbook be developed for carrying the A.A. message into correctional facilities.

How to Do Corrections Work

Why A.A.s Carry the Message Behind the Walls

Many A.A. members are unaware of the important work being carried out by corrections committees. To those involved, however, corrections work is an opportunity to carry the A.A. message to the confined alcoholic who wants to live sober, one day at a time. Through a corrections committee working with corrections personnel, alcoholics are reached who might never otherwise find the A.A. program.

An active corrections committee is a vital link to prisons and jails, providing professionals and other workers in correctional facilities with information about A.A., literature, and guidelines for setting up A.A. groups on the inside.

The aim of this workbook is to provide information about the corrections process—from the formation of a corrections committee to the functions such a committee can perform. It also contains suggested ways in which A.A. members can best do corrections work, as well as suggested activities for local committees.

The needs and experiences of your own area will determine what your committee should decide to do. The suggestions in this workbook are just that—suggestions—to spark your thinking on how to form a corrections committee and cooperate with correctional facilities people.

A Mini-History

The first Correctional Facilities Committee was formed in 1977 when The General Service Conference recommended that the Institutions Committee be dissolved

and two new committees—one dealing with Correctional Facilities, and one with Treatment Facilities—be formed. Local corrections committees have been established throughout the years, most of them working in collaboration with local intergroups or central offices.

Singleness of Purpose

Some professionals refer to alcoholism and drug addiction using the same terminology. Nonalcoholics are, therefore, sometimes introduced to A.A. and encouraged to attend A.A. meetings. Nonalcoholics may attend *open* A.A. meetings as observers, but only those with a *drinking* problem may attend *closed* meetings. It may be useful to share the pamphlet “*A Message to Corrections Professionals.*” www.aa.org/message-corrections-professionals and “Problems Other Than Alcohol” www.aa.org/problems-other-alcohol.

Working Within the Traditions

The guiding principles of the A.A. Fellowship are contained in the Twelve Traditions (*See Experience Has Taught Us: An Introduction to Our Twelve Traditions* www.aa.org/experience-has-taught-us-introduction-our-twelve-traditions). The responsibility for preserving the Traditions rests with A.A.s alone; in order for A.A.s to preserve these Traditions, we must comprehend them. We can't expect non-A.A.s to understand and observe them unless we are well informed about them.

Sometimes corrections personnel are eager to use A.A. as a resource, but they don't understand our Traditions and unwittingly cause problems for A.A.s—both those who carry the message behind the walls and those in custody. Experienced corrections workers learn the vital importance of understanding and explaining the Traditions to corrections personnel. Thoughtful reading of A.A. literature (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and the pamphlets “A.A. Tradition—How It Developed” and “The Twelve Traditions Illustrated”) is essential for anyone who works with non-A.A.s.

Of course, all the Traditions are important in this Twelfth Step work, and Traditions Five, Six, Eleven, and Twelve are directly related to it.

Tradition Five: “Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.” This tradition further states: “...better do one thing supremely well than many badly.” (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 150)

Singleness of purpose is central to the survival of A.A. People in custody faced with no programs to address problems other than alcohol (e.g., drugs, overeating) often find their way to A.A. meetings. A.A.s not wishing to exclude such individuals from meetings can do so only with a firm understanding of A.A.'s singleness of purpose.

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.”

Toward corrections personnel, like those of any other agency, the A.A. policy is “cooperation but not affiliation.” We should make it clear that A.A. is available as a resource to sponsor A.A. groups in correctional facilities, but is not affiliated with the facility, or any other fellowship.

Tradition Eleven: “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.” (This also applies to television, video and audio recordings, and publications such as the correctional facilities newsletters.)

A.A. is not a secret society, and we carry the message to whomever we can. If a suffering alcoholic never meets an A.A., how is he or she going to find us? But we must be ever aware to remain anonymous in speaking *personally* for A.A. at the public level; we must try to give corrections personnel an accurate picture of the A.A. Fellowship as a whole.

Tradition Twelve: “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”

A.A.s who carry the message into correctional facilities have found it helpful to remember and to emphasize to corrections personnel that A.A. is a fellowship of peers, and that A.A.s learn to help other alcoholics without taking credit or reward for our own or others’ recovery.

Forming a Corrections Committee

To better understand how to form a committee see The A.A. Guidelines on Corrections Committees (www.aa.org/aa-guidelines-correctional-committees). The A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the experience of A.A. members in the various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference of the U.S. and Canada.

One thought to keep in mind—Easy Does It! Once you decide to get started with the formation of a committee, it is a good idea to take it easy at first until you know just what the needs are and how many people are available to get the job done.

The 1993 Conference Correctional Facilities Committee suggested that local correctional facilities committees obtain a permanent mailing address, post office box or email address so that incarcerated persons can be given this information to use for some of their A.A. needs, such as, literature, prerelease contacts, “outside” speakers.

A.A. Volunteers in Correctional Facilities

A.A. members wishing to carry our message to alcoholics behind the walls of correctional facilities should understand that we always do so within the regulations of such institutions. The primary goal for corrections staff is the safety and security of the people in custody, staff and volunteers who are behind the walls. The rules and regulations are designed to support the safety of all. A.A. members are usually treated no differently than other volunteers and, therefore, they are usually subject to the same regulations. Since regulations *can and do vary*, A.A. members will need to be informed about the *specific* rules and regulations for each facility they would like to enter. To that end, good communication between corrections administrators and local A.A. committees is essential. Following are some common volunteer regulations that A.A. members may be required to follow:

- Facilities may require A.A. volunteers to sign agreements stating that the A.A. member will comply with local, state, and federal regulations regarding correctional facilities and prisoners.

- AA volunteers may be required to submit to TB testing or may be required to have vaccinations prior to entering the facility.
- AA volunteers may have to attend trainings on an annual basis.
- AA volunteers may need to undergo a criminal background check. A prior conviction may not disqualify a member from being allowed to volunteer as this is viewed on a case by case basis. If a member is not allowed to volunteer, see if the facility would consider allowing the member to speak at a virtual meeting or serve in some other way.
- Facilities may not allow A.A. volunteers to be on the visitors list of any person currently in that facility.
- Facilities may not allow A.A. volunteers to take phone calls from individuals currently in that facility.
- Facilities may not allow A.A. volunteers to have any contact with the families of a person currently in that facility.
- AA volunteers may not be allowed to place money on a person's account.

Deciding to participate in corrections Twelfth Step work is an important individual decision. A.A. members should carefully read all documents required by correctional facilities, and fully understand and be willing to comply with all rules and regulations prior to commencing such work. The corrections screening process often takes several months to complete. Do not be discouraged over the length of time this may take.

Sample Letter to AA Member explaining Orientation, Security Training and the Clearance Process (each areafacility will have its own process)

Thank you for your interest in taking meetings into Rikers Island. The Corrections and Treatment Facilities Committee (CTFC) suggests that all AA members who want to chair meetings in correctional facilities should have at least one year of continuous sobriety and take the commitment for two years. In addition, all speakers going with you should have one year of sobriety.

The NYC Department of Correction (DOC) has announced that it prefers volunteers to obtain a DOC Identification Card, especially volunteers who Chair or lead the meetings. However, for the time being, the DOC will grant clearance for up to six times a year if you complete and file a Volunteer/Service Provider Application. The following is an outline of the application process for getting the DOC ID Card.

As per DOC Guidelines, all applications will be considered, except applicants who within the past three years:

- Have a conviction for a violation, misdemeanor or felony
- Have been under probation, parole, or post release supervision
- Have served any jail or prison time
- Have any criminal charges pending
- Fail to disclose previous or current criminal justice involvement

Please complete the Volunteer/Service Provider Application (same as DOC ID application), making sure all "Yes" and "No" questions are answered. Also, be sure to fill out all of Section B on pages one and two in detail. If you have any criminal charges, please list them to the best of your ability. The DOC is more concerned with us being completely honest than with our backgrounds. After completion, please print and make

sure all questions are answered. Then mail or drop off your original application to: NY Intergroup, Att. CTFC, 307 7th Ave. Suite 303, New York, NY 10001. If dropping off, please call Inter-group to make an appointment at 212- 647-1647 to confirm it's ok to drop your application off that day.

We are currently assigned to the North Infirmary Command (NIC), Eric M. Taylor Center (EMTC), Anna M. Kross Center (AMKC) and George R. Vierno Center (GRVC) buildings on Rikers Island; however, other Units will follow.

The entire clearance process can take anywhere from several weeks to months and will require two trips to the DOC headquarters in East Elmhurst, Queens. Your first trip will be for orientation and fingerprinting. This should take about an hour. After you have cleared the background check, you will attend a security training on one day for a few hours, at the end of which you will be given your DOC ID card. Additional trainings on PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) are required every other year.

After you have completed the application, please also scan and email it back for our records. That way, if we need to do any follow-up with DOC, we can forward your application again to the appropriate DOC staff member and you will be copied on the email. Thereafter, you are responsible for responding to any follow up inquiries or instructions from DOC.

As you may already know, this service is both fulfilling and challenging. As a result of your participation, sick and suffering alcoholics are hearing AA's message within the walls of most New York City correctional facilities. Personally, serving AA members behind the walls has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my sobriety.

Thank you for your service,

CTFC Chair

How Local A.A. Service Committees Can Help A.A. Volunteers

Corrections Committees and Hospital and Institutions (H&I) Committees are encouraged to thoroughly review and understand all procedures of the institutions with whom they cooperate, and to share this information with all A.A. members who bring A.A. meetings inside. Some committees keep copies of the regulations and forms that must be completed so that A.A. members new to this service work can review the materials prior to making their decision. Some committees share this information with A.A. members new to corrections service through regular workshops, information sheets, and volunteer packets developed by local trusted servants.

The "Four Step" process in the Corrections Workbook (p. 13) describes how to gather specific information about security practices prior to starting (or restarting) meetings in correctional facilities.

Digital literature

Conference-approved A.A.W.S. and AA Grapevine copyrighted eBooks and audiobooks are available on tablets and desktops in corrections venues, prisons and jails in the U.S., and can now be accessed by people who are incarcerated and by the professionals who serve them. Thanks to the 7th tradition contributions of members, we have contracts with several vendors and can provide this digital literature at no cost to persons behind the walls.

Local trusted servants, can ask their contacts in all correctional settings, which vendor contracts they hold. Please contact corrections@aa.org for current vendor information.

Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)

Shared experience for volunteers

The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) of 2003, is the first United States federal law intended to deter the sexual assault of prisoners.

The following is excerpts from the Missouri Department of Corrections policy on PREA for volunteers. In Missouri, all volunteers are considered unpaid staff and are subject to the same rules and regulations as paid staff. This may be the same in other correctional systems.

It is important to note that our policy D1-8.13 Offender Sexual Abuse and Harassment states “The department has a zero tolerance for all forms of offender sexual abuse, harassment, and retaliation.” It is our responsibility to ensure that the offenders in our custody are free from sexual abuse and harassment and the department has introduced several methods to combat this crime from occurring in our facilities.

When sexual abuse occurs — even within a correctional institution — a crime has occurred. That crime has a victim and alleged perpetrator. The fact that the victim is an offender does not matter.

It is important to remember that PREA is not only about the response to sexual abuse of offenders, but it is also about prevention. It is important that you know and enforce the rules regarding the sexual conduct of offenders. Let us make it clear that sexual activity is not acceptable. Within your role as a volunteer, it is important that you understand the rules and that you know how to properly communicate any suspicious behavior.

Do not use female names or prison slang when referring to a male offender, follow appropriate reporting procedures, be mindful that offender sexual abuse is a very important and serious issue, and it must be dealt with immediately; be always professional. Do not laugh or joke about sexual activity or sexual abuse with or around offenders, staff, volunteers, or contractors.

You will be interacting with offenders in a very different way than the staff members who work daily with offenders do and at times you will develop a different type of relationship. While it is important to always maintain appropriate boundaries with these relationships, which will discuss further in this training, you may also pick up on red flags that could indicate abuse has or is occurring in a facility.

Another key element of PREA is Reporting. Missouri State Statute 217.410 makes failure to report offender abuse against the law! We are all mandated reporters and will be held liable if we fail to make a report. All allegations are to be taken seriously, including anonymous and third-party reports. You as a volunteer have NO discretion on what to report!

Due to the reporting requirements of all staff members, contractors and volunteers the Missouri Department of Corrections has developed a Coordinated Response Process.

Those of you who are not serving in a “custody” role also have an obligation to keep the offender safe and report the event. Within your role you will ask the offender to stay with you and you will contact a custody officer within your immediate location. You must keep the offender with you until an officer takes them into their custody.

As a volunteer, if you are given information of an allegation from a victim, a third party or anonymously you must immediately report the allegation to the institution. The institution will determine which coordinate response they must follow based on policy and the allegation, but it is critical that all information shared with you is immediately reported to a DOC employee at the institution/CRC/CSC you are assigned to.

Tools and Ideas for Doing Corrections Work

When sharing about corrections service, refer to an excerpt from a letter that our co-founder Bill W. wrote to a prison group in 1949:

Every A.A. has been, in a sense, a prisoner. Each of us has walled himself out of society; each has known social stigma. The lot of you folks has been even more difficult: In your case, society has also built a wall around you. But there isn't any real essential difference, a fact that practically all A.A.s now know. Therefore, when you members come into the world of A.A. on the outside, you can be sure that no one will care a fig that you have done time. What you are trying to be—not what you were—is all that counts with us.

Ideas to Stimulate Corrections Twelfth Step Work

1. Utilize the video A New Freedom <https://www.aa.org/A-New-Freedom-30-49> (available in shorter versions) and *Carrying the Message Behind These Walls* <https://www.aa.org/Carrying-the-Message-Behind-These-Walls>. Show and/or display the DVD at local A.A. events and include in group literature displays.
2. Host a corrections event that is solely targeted for members who are not involved in corrections service and may be curious to discover “What It’s All About.”
3. Show the DVD “A.A. Video for Legal and Corrections Professionals.” <https://www.aa.org/A.A.-Video-for-Legal-and-Corrections-Professionals> in a workshop to share the professional’s viewpoint on the value of A.A. as a resource in correctional facilities.
4. Emphasize that when carrying the message into a correctional facility, we share experience, strength and hope with other alcoholics as we do at any A.A. meeting on the “outside.” Having prison experience is not a prerequisite—sobriety in A.A. is the only requirement. People in custody are more interested in learning how we got and stayed sober through A.A.’s Twelve Steps, rather than hearing about time we may have spent in prison.
5. Create PowerPoint presentations about A.A. corrections service, including images and discussion topics.
6. Host A.A. round-ups inside correctional facilities similar to those previously shared about in Box 4-5-9. Contact GSO for Box 4-5-9 corrections articles or visit www.aa.org.
7. Send sharing on local corrections workshops and events to GSO.
8. Discuss ideas in areas and districts regarding ways to collect contributions from groups and members to purchase literature for local correctional facilities.

9. Encourage areas and districts to budget funds for purchase of A.A. literature for local correctional facilities.
10. Include local corrections events on area websites.
11. Introduce someone to corrections service by taking them to corrections events and/or A.A. meetings on the inside, or obtain a guest pass to bring them to a meeting behind the walls.
12. List Corrections, H&I, and Bridging the Gap Committee chairs with GSO so they receive useful corrections-related material and communications.
13. Share about corrections service experience with excitement and enthusiasm.
14. Encourage A.A. members who have been in custody to get involved in all aspects of corrections service, as well as emphasizing the effect A.A. had on his/her sobriety when they were incarcerated.
15. Create a calendar of corrections events around the United States and Canada.
16. Encourage sharing regarding what might be “trends” in corrections, and how might A.A. respond to growing needs. Send the sharing to GSO for possible dissemination in Activity Updates, etc.
17. Invite members to participate in the Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS) or Prerelease Contact Program by keeping copies of flyers available and quoting from Sharing from Behind the Walls on the value of these unique service opportunities.
18. For members interested in becoming involved in corrections service, give them an issue of Sharing from Behind the Walls to read so they can see that the A.A. message on the “inside” is no different than on the “outside.”
19. Suggest groups collect past Grapevine and La Viña magazines, and hold “stitching parties” to remove staples from these older issues to increase the chance of those magazines being allowed into facilities.
20. Mention that packs of back issues of Grapevine and La Viña can be ordered for a discounted price. Also, subscriptions can be purchased for correctional facilities. Contact the Grapevine at (800) 631-6025.

Guidelines for A.A. Presentations to Corrections Personnel

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide suggestions for A.A. members on introducing Alcoholics Anonymous to those who work—or plan to work—in the corrections/criminal justice field. The audience for such workshops would be: all levels of corrections personnel in local, state, provincial and federal prisons, jails and detention centers, and students attending corrections/criminal justice training academies as part of their preparation for, or continuing education in, the corrections/criminal fields.

Like many endeavors in A.A., all it takes is a few dedicated A.A. members willing to launch these types of efforts. It is important to keep lines of communication open with other A.A. committees including CPC, PI, H&I and Treatment to cooperate and avoid misunderstandings. It may be helpful to hold some sharing sessions for this purpose. (See service piece “How to Conduct a Sharing Session” SMF-111.)

The relationship of the corrections committee to the rest of the A.A. service structure in a given area or district is best left to local autonomy.

Preliminary considerations: Many states and provinces have training academies for corrections personnel. A corrections committee member may send an introductory letter to an official at the facility, to be followed by a telephone call. It is important to find out who in the facility handles A.A. volunteers. It may be an activities coordinator, a chaplain, psychologist, volunteers coordinator, or a security director. The inclusion of pertinent A.A. literature and perhaps a copy of the DVD *A.A. Video for Legal and Corrections Professionals* offering the experience of other corrections professionals with A.A. as a resource may be helpful. A.A. members scheduling these sessions find it important to remain sensitive to the schedules and working conditions of the training facility.

Often local colleges and universities also provide criminal justice courses for those in the corrections field. Contacts might be made with faculty members, who often welcome guest speakers.

Presentations: The presentations often include a panel on which some presenters may be A.A. members who were formerly in custody and are well-versed on what A.A. does and does not do. As appropriate, food and coffee may be offered, along with a display of A.A. literature. A question-and-answer or Ask-It-Basket opportunity is generally welcome, as is the option to sign up for *About A.A.*, GSO's newsletter to professionals. Most important, offer to take attendees to an open A.A. meeting.

Format: Depending on the time available and the specific needs of the audience, the following points may be covered:

1. Introduce yourself and explain why you are there—to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous, what it is and what it is not. Remember, we are not corrections professionals; we can share only our A.A. experience.
2. Describe how A.A. members who carry a meeting inside are selected. Volunteers are usually recruited by an A.A. member who has been doing corrections service for some time, meets a minimum sobriety requirement, has passed a background check (if required by the facility), and is a sober, productive member of society. It is also important that A.A. speakers at meetings are on time, well groomed, and courteous.
3. You may choose to show the DVD *A.A. Video for Legal and Corrections Professionals* offering the experience of other corrections professionals with A.A. as a resource, or another video such as *A New Freedom*, available from the General Service Office.
4. Read and explain the A.A. Preamble.
5. Explain the Twelve Traditions as highlighted on page 5—focusing on Traditions 5,6,11 and 12.
6. Describe the various types of meetings: open, closed, speaker, discussion, beginners, Step, etc.
7. Provide the phone number of the local intergroup/central office or A.A. answering service. You may also suggest GSO's website "Find A.A. Near You" <https://www.aa.org/find-aa> and the Meeting guide app: <https://www.aa.org/meeting-guide-app>.

8. Explain A.A. meetings on the inside.
9. Describe the Corrections Correspondence Service (C.C.S.) and, if possible, distribute C.C.S. flyers.
10. Explain Prerelease Contacts and Bridging the Gap programs.
11. Talk about sponsorship.
12. Distribute A.A. literature, such as “Information on A.A.” (F-2) and “A Message to Corrections Professionals” (P-20). Present information on the aa.org website.
13. Mention that A.A. is a way of life; it is not a class that someone graduates from or a self-help program. Many members remain active in A.A. for a lifetime.
14. In closing, express your gratitude for the opportunity to share about Alcoholics Anonymous.
15. It is nice to send a thank-you note to those in attendance. Keep a copy of both the presentation and any correspondence to pass on to the next person who takes this service position.

Helpful information can also be found in the A.A. Guidelines for Corrections Committees and the Workbooks for Cooperation with the Professional Community, Public Information and Treatment Settings.

The Four-Step-Process Approach to Starting or Restarting A.A. Meetings in Correctional Facilities

Some Suggestions for Using the Four-Step Process

Be mindful there can be frequent changes with the facility’s administration staff and may require you to reintroduce A.A. to the correctional facility staff.

Some states and provinces have successfully used the four-step process for starting or restarting A.A. meetings in a correctional facility. These are the suggested steps of the four-step process:

1. Meet with the warden (or designee) to learn about the facility.
2. Meet with A.A.s to develop the A.A. program. (See AA program example on pg. 33)
3. Send the A.A. program document to the warden (or designee) for his or her approval.
4. On approval, implement the program.

In facilities where the process has been used, the A.A. program seems to function more smoothly. A.A. Corrections, H&I, PI, CPC and Treatment committee representatives are treated with respect, and it generally has been easier to find A.A.s to participate in the program. Also, it has been the experience of many who have used the four-step process that the warden (or designee) is grateful to receive a documented description of the program to be used in the facility.

The process may be initiated by identifying a correctional facility that does not currently have an A.A. program, and an A.A. member willing to be the outside sponsor or carry meetings into the correctional facility. The district or area corrections chair, or H&I representative might send an invitation letter to the warden (or designee).

Whenever possible it has been most effective to work directly with the warden of a facility (or designee) because his or her support of the A.A. program goes a long way to ensure support from other correctional professionals at the facility. A designee might be the chaplain, a counselor, program director or an assistant warden. If you succeed in making contact, your goal is to set up a meeting at the facility. During your conversation to schedule the meeting, explain the purpose is to learn about the facility so that the best A.A. program possible can be designed for the facility. The meeting can be scheduled for one hour.

If there is no response to the letter, follow up with a phone call. If you receive a “No,” consider revisiting the facility at a later date.

It is suggested to have at least three A.A.s at the meeting, including whoever made the first contact and the A.A. who will be identified as being the outside sponsor. The warden (or designee) is likely to have staff responsible for programs, staff responsible for volunteers, and perhaps security at the meeting. Bring along the Correctional Facility Fact Sheet (See example on pg. 29) to help keep the conversation on track and to insure you get the information needed to develop the A.A. program. The meeting usually starts by going around the room and introducing the attendees.

It is suggested that you begin the conversation by asking permission to take notes and offering to have them copied for those in attendance. Following that, you might state the purpose of the meeting—to become familiar with the needs and requirements of the facility—and give a brief, five-minute explanation of what A.A. is and is not. The Preamble describes A.A. very well, and can be talked about slowly. You can ask the warden (or designee) the questions on the Correctional Facility Fact Sheet or you could say “tell us about your facility” and simply take notes. As the warden (or designee) speaks, fill in the fact sheet. Check your progress. If something is missed, ask specifically about it. Continue down the fact sheet. You may want an A.A. to fill in the fact sheet while you lead the discussion. Resist the temptation to make commitments about what A.A. will do, while at the same time noting any requests that are made.

Following the meeting with the warden (or designee), schedule a separate meeting with Corrections, H&I, or other committee representative to develop the A.A. program. Talk through what you can and can’t do. Remember that it is better to start out small and simple, and build over time. You want to be able to deliver on any commitment that is made to the facility in the A.A. program document. In one situation, a minimum-security facility, an open speaker meeting once a month was started. A few months later, a closed meeting was started weekly for the other weeks of the month and slowly built in attendance. The open meeting acts as the “attraction rather than promotion” part of the program and allows those in custody to decide if they want to attend the closed meetings.

Write up the A.A. program in a document and sign two originals and send to the warden (or designee) within two weeks of your initial meeting. The warden (or designee) can sign both, keep one for the facility files, and return the other to A.A. (A couple of sample program plans are also available.)

Once the signed program document is received, begin the implementation.

NOTE: All referenced documents are available at GSO’s Corrections Desk upon request.

Guidelines for A.A. Presentations to Those in Custody Remembering to Keep It Simple

1. First impressions are very important, so look your best and be on time.
2. Using the A.A. Preamble as your frame of reference, you should begin by stating what A.A. is and is not.
3. Most people will want to know, why you? Briefly talk about the way things were (e.g., your last drunk) and what things are like now that you are a member of A.A. (This portion of your talk should not be more than 15 minutes.)
4. Next, describe the format of the A.A. meetings you will be bringing into the facility; how often meetings will be held and how they may participate. (Be certain to obtain information on the proper procedure for participation by those inside from the facility staff.)
5. You may want to distribute and briefly describe the following pamphlets: “This Is A.A.”; “Is A.A. for You?”; “A Newcomer Asks”; “Frequently Asked Questions About A.A.”; “It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell” and *Behind the Walls: A Message of Hope*. (Add any other pamphlets you think appropriate.)
6. It is very important to pace yourself so that there is ample time to answer as many questions as possible. Suggested length of presentation—one hour.

Remember, having once been incarcerated is not a requirement. A.A.s wishing to carry the message into correctional facilities are encouraged to attend corrections committee meetings.

Workshops: Many corrections committees have found that workshops—taking a hard look at local needs, opportunities, and attitudes as well as the service structure, Traditions, and Concepts—are fine tools for exploring ideas and settling on methods for doing corrections work.

A typical workshop might begin with the Serenity Prayer, followed by a reading of the Twelve Concepts. The Fifth Tradition could be read and related to the First Concept. (The Fifth Tradition says that each group has one primary purpose—to carry the message; the First Concept states that ultimate responsibility and authority belong to the groups.) The DVDs *A New Freedom* and *Carrying the Message Behind These Walls* could be shown.

CDs of the corrections workshops at the recent International Convention could be played. Other kinds of brief presentations on corrections could serve the same purpose, for example, excerpts from the A.A. Guidelines or material from this workbook.

A discussion period, in which the entire group breaks up into smaller groups, could focus on the following topics (or topics of your own choosing):

1. What is the best way to form a corrections committee? How do we form a working plan?
2. What is the best way to reach corrections personnel?
3. How can we attract A.A. members to corrections work?
4. How can we facilitate relationships between corrections personnel and A.A.? What type of presentations are appropriate?

5. What are the best A.A. attitudes toward corrections personnel?
6. How can we make contacts with corrections personnel?
7. What A.A. literature is best, and to whom should it be delivered?

Hold Corrections Workshops and/or a Unity Day—where A.A. members already involved in service work share about the rewards of this kind of service. Forms could be developed giving A.A. members a choice regarding the kinds of corrections service work they want to do... for example, speaking at A.A. meetings inside correctional facilities; corresponding with members who are incarcerated through the Corrections Correspondence Service; participating in a prerelease A.A. contact program or a program to help those in detention in Bridging the Gap.

Open Meetings and/or Special Breakfast Meetings: Hold open meetings and/or special breakfast meetings at A.A. conventions using incarcerated A.A. members as speakers who can demonstrate the positive results of carrying the message into correctional facilities. This is done in areas where the prison system allows some people out on pass for this purpose.

Group Sponsorship of a Correctional Facility Meeting: In some areas, A.A. groups accept responsibility for A.A. meetings in a single facility for one month a year. This has been done through GSRs and also through intergroup service structures. This is more easily done in states and provinces that do not have extremely complicated clearance procedures for those visiting prisons.

Exploring the Need for a Newsletter: Perhaps you can investigate the need for a correctional facilities newsletter in your area. This newsletter could be circulated to correctional facilities and individual A.A.s involved in corrections work. It could serve as a resource and information tool and a welcome communication aid.

Working with Other Corrections Committees: Today there is a definite need for improved communication among corrections committees within geographic regions. One tool for implementing communication is to hold state, province or regional conventions for those interested and involved in corrections work, both A.A.s and non-A.A.s. Local corrections committees could work together in setting up such an event.

Understanding the Role of the Corrections Representative: The group corrections representative is a “messenger” for his or her A.A. group, bringing information to and from correctional facilities. They inform the group of openings for speakers and chairpersons in correctional facilities meetings, help volunteers make contact with the corrections committees and report on the needs and activities of the A.A. groups on the inside.

Regional and Special Forums: For A.A.s who attend Regional and/or Special Forums, it is suggested that they request and attend corrections workshops.

How to Conduct a Sharing Session

(The following is a service piece, available from GSO)

The purpose of a Sharing Session is to fill a need for improved communication among area committees, districts, and groups, thereby strengthening services in A.A. through cooperation. These sessions are called for a specific purpose requiring shared experience and ideas, in order to best serve Alcoholics Anonymous. Sharing Sessions are not designed to reach a conclusion as, say, at a regular A.A. business meeting. They are usually held where a problem has reached difficult proportions at the service level involved, and options to surmount the challenge need to be thought about.

The usual Sharing Session format provides for a “chairperson” who presents the problem to be discussed, and then asks for comments. Participants respond, usually going around the room, speaking for no longer than a specific time agreed upon ahead of time by everyone present (perhaps one or two minutes), after which a bell is rung to indicate “time’s up.” A participant may speak again on the same topic *only* after all others have shared once. He or she may then speak again, in turn. The sharing continues until all have said what they need to say on each go around the room. Remember, no one need ever be ashamed of his or her opinion.

While the sharing is taking place, a volunteer “secretary” takes down the essence of what is shared. This write-up should be both brief and informal. Since sharing on a specific topic may take an hour or more before it is exhausted, it is usually better to plan on having only one topic per Sharing Session. Again, no individual should attempt to sum up or draw conclusions at the end of a Sharing Session. Each participant will have received “food for thought.” However, often it will be found that a group conscience has emerged.

To be effective, Sharing Sessions should include no more than 30 participants (larger groups can be broken into two sessions). These sessions may also be built into regular area, district or group meetings. Area committees may find that Sharing Sessions foster greater interest and willingness on the part of GSRs to participate. Districts and groups may find Sharing Sessions a preferred way to discuss issues that are particularly sensitive or thorny.

Your General Service Office is glad to hear from you on how your Sharing Sessions turn out.

Carrying the Message Into Youth Detention Centers and Short-term Facilities

Although the basics of carrying A.A.’s message into youth detention centers and short-term facilities are no different than carrying the message into any other correctional facility, many Area Corrections Committees felt there was an expressed need to include some information in this workbook regarding what they viewed as added challenges to service work in these two areas and, based on their experiences, some suggestions on leading meetings in these institutions.

Experience shows that there is often a rapid turnover of individuals in both youth detention centers and short-term facilities. Frequently, attendance at A.A. meetings in

these institutions may not be voluntary. It is prudent to be aware that, like many A.A. members in the beginning, some people may not believe they have a problem with alcohol and resent attending an A.A. meeting. It is important to remember that A.A. is there to offer a message of hope. You may not be able to see immediate results, but a seed may be planted.

Suggested Ways of Conducting A.A. Meetings In Youth Detention Centers and Short-Term Facilities

1. Use a beginners meeting format, focusing on the first three Steps and providing information about the basic tools an A.A. member might use to stay away from the first drink.
2. Give an informational presentation that might include a Q&A session. The free one-page service piece available from the General Service Office, "Information on A.A.," is useful in telling newcomers what A.A. does and does not do.
3. Explain and emphasize the importance of sponsorship (use pamphlet Questions and Answers <https://www.aa.org/questions-and-answers-sponsorship> on Sponsorship).
4. Lead a topic meeting. A topic that has worked well at meetings in short-term facilities in one major city is "What are you going to do *differently* this time?"
5. Where sharing is limited, reading passages from the pamphlet Young People and AA may help to facilitate conversation.
6. The use of CDs, DVDs and illustrated pamphlets is especially helpful to both younger and older individuals in these facilities.

Suggested material to read to facilitate meeting topics.

1. Young People and A.A. pamphlet <https://www.aa.org/young-people-and-aa> (P-4)
2. Young & Sober: Stories From AA Grapevine aagrapevine.org/young-sober-stories-from-aa-grapevine-soft-cover Young & Sober: Stories From AA Grapevine (GV 27)
3. Young and Sober in A.A. From Drinking to Recovery Video <https://www.aa.org/young-and-sober-in-aa-from-drinking-to-recovery>
4. 25 and Under Video <https://www.aa.org/25-and-Under>

Additional Challenges in Carrying the Message Into Youth Detention Facilities

1. In youth detention centers, there is often a marked age difference between the program participants and most incoming A.A.s. Many of those under the age of 18 do not have a long drinking history. They may have difficulty identifying with the stories of older A.A.s. Many of the "yets" that older members have experienced may seem unbelievable. When possible, have young A.A. members chair the meeting and share their stories.
2. There are often stricter rules governing access and confidentiality.
3. A young person's fear of appearing "weak" to his or her peers might hinder attendance at or participation in an A.A. meeting.

4. There may be peer pressure to appear “tough,” which may lead to behavioral problems during a meeting.
5. The required presence of or lack of participation at A.A. meetings in these facilities is generally the rule.

Common Sense

As with any A.A. service commitment in a correctional facility, common sense, as well as cooperation with and guidance from the youth facilities’ staff, are essentials to the success of this kind of Twelfth Step service.

The Transition to A.A. On the “Outside” for Young People

Often, because the average age of A.A. members is generally older, newly released young people may have a hard time settling into an “outside” group and finding new friends and new activities to support their first tentative steps toward recovery. Welcoming and treating younger members as equals as they join the Fellowship are important ingredients to making them feel a part of any group—everyone may not be the same age, but all are recovering through the same Twelve Steps of A.A., one day at a time.

1. Introducing Young People to the International Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (ICYPAA) that has a weekend long conference each year. <https://www.icypaa.org/about-icypaa>
2. Share relevant Grapevine articles
3. YPAA or Bust <https://www.aagrapevine.org/magazine/2019/sep/ypaa-or-bust>
4. Wild Child <https://www.aagrapevine.org/magazine/2011/apr/april-2011-wild-child>

Note: Based on the responses to the 1996 questionnaire from Corrections Committee chairpersons, the subcommittee on developing the copy for the Corrections Workbook recommended to the trustees’ Committee on Corrections that, although problems *other* than alcohol might be significantly different in women’s facilities, no additional information on carrying the A.A. message into women’s facilities was needed for this workbook.

Overview of Area 10 (Colorado) Corrections Committee Structure

The only purpose of the Area Corrections Committee is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to the alcoholic who is confined. The activities of this committee are based on and governed by the Twelve Traditions of A.A. Since our public relations policy is one of attraction rather than promotion, we serve any correctional facility at the invitation of the administration, ever conscious of the admonition “cooperation not affiliation.” The purpose of this committee is fulfilled in two ways: 1. Taking A.A. meetings into correctional facilities, and 2. Providing Conference-approved A.A. literature with monies collected in “pink cans” (some groups pass around a pink can to collect literature funds for members in custody).

The Area Corrections chair is appointed to serve a two-year term by the area chair and is ratified by the area committee. The Area Corrections chair coordinates all Area 10 correctional activities, and appoints people to serve for two years in the following trusted servant positions:

Secretary—records and distributes minutes of all meetings.

Treasurer—receives all contributions made through the pink can program and other sources such as assembly funding and Conference funds.

Librarian—orders literature from GSO, maintains an inventory and distributes literature to A.A. facility contacts for all correctional facilities.

Archives—compiles historical records of all A.A. correctional facilities.

Conference chair—conducts the annual Area Corrections Conference, which serves both as an educational tool and as an exchange of information between A.A. members and corrections-related professionals.

Corresponding/Prerelease Contact chair—provides outside A.A. contacts to correspond with those in detention and coordinates efforts to pair persons being released with outside A.A. volunteers.

Regional chair—serves as a link between the District Corrections Committee and the Area Corrections Committee.

The Area Corrections Committee is a clearinghouse for all corrections activities in the area. It is administrative in nature. The work is done at the local level by A.A. members through the district structure.

Overview of Area 10 (Colorado) District Structure

District Chair—is appointed for a two-year term at the district committee meeting. Responsibilities include coordinating all corrections activities in the district. Appoints/approves A.A. facility contacts for each facility in the district. Works closely with the regional chair to keep the Area Corrections Committee informed on corrections activities in the district.

A.A. Facility Contacts—appointed/approved by the District Corrections chair. Coordinates all A.A. activities at the specified facility. Appoints A.A. meeting contacts to ensure all meetings behind the walls are covered.

A.A. Meeting Contacts—appointed/approved by the A.A. Facility Contact. Coordinates volunteers to cover A.A. meetings at the designated facility at the specified day and time.

Area 10 (Colorado) Seventh Tradition Support

General Funding: Area Corrections Committee receives funding from the area assembly to cover expenses of printing, phone, postage, and supplies (envelopes, etc.). The Corrections Conference is self-supporting through a registration fee and raffle, and the district structure is self-supporting through the Seventh Tradition and workshops.

Pink Can: This idea was “borrowed” from Northern California. It began in that area in 1985. The only purpose of the pink can is to provide GSO. Conference—approved literature to those confined behind the walls.

Groups decide by their group conscience if they want to support corrections work in this way. If so, these cans are available through the Area Corrections Committee. Usually the can sits by the coffeepot or is passed after the regular Seventh Tradition at meetings. Those who wish to contribute may do so by putting in pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. The money is then sent to the Area Corrections treasurer for deposit into a “pink can” account. Checks and/or money orders are made payable to the Colorado Corrections Committee and marked for “pink can.” Checks are then issued to GSO for literature. When a correctional facility needs literature, the A.A. Facility Contact places an order with the Area Corrections literature chair. The literature chair then fills the order and ships to the contact for distribution in the facility. In 1990, we were able to ship more than \$18,000 worth of literature or over 15,000 pieces of literature (including 2,323 Big Books) to three federal C.F., four juvenile C.F., 17 state facilities, and 26 county jails.

Shared Experience on How Committees Collect Contributions for Literature

Shared Experience on How Committees Collect Contributions to Purchase Literature

Alcoholics confined in correctional facilities usually have just one A.A. meeting a week available to them, if they are lucky. A sizable number are on wait lists and go to none at all. But there’s another way to carry the message to these people: Provide them with meetings in print through and additional AAWS literature, pamphlets and the Grapevine. The only stumbling block is money.

How are local corrections committees funded? How do they accumulate literature for inside meetings? These questions have become a frequent refrain at all levels of service, including the General Service Office, where more than 90 percent of the letters that cross the Corrections Desk contain requests for free literature. In the spirit of A.A.’s Seventh Tradition, the search is on for financing approaches that make practical as well as spiritual sense.

We have received some wonderful sharing on what some areas have done and hope this is helpful.

In New Hampshire, for example, the area assembly has allocated funds for the purchase of literature by the institutions committee. Additionally, book donations are received from groups throughout the area.

Libraries in some Texas area prison units are well stocked and maintained by a District Corrections Committee and individual A.A.s also contribute books, pamphlets and Grapevines.

In Kansas, it is reported that they have a yearly sum of approximately \$1,000 that is allocated for literature. Although this is the biggest item in their budget, it is still a meager sum, and a short while ago they started placing contribution cans at their meetings. As they tell all their members, even the smallest contribution helps.

In the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, a D.C.M. asked at an intergroup meeting if any groups would be interested in doing group Twelfth Step work by contributing money to buy literature for the correctional facilities in that area. The intergroup reps went back to their home groups and within two weeks, the representatives had received checks to buy more than a case of portable softcover Big Books.

One group in Jacksonville, Florida, through a group conscience decision, sponsors a prison group. The outside A.A.s buy literature and contribute back issues of Grapevines, which they purchase in lots from the Grapevine office. Another district in Florida shares that any person in custody who wants pamphlets has only to contact the corrections committee, and if a person in detention wants to buy books, the corrections committee will pay half the cost.

Area 44, Northern New Jersey, implemented the idea of having jail boxes in home groups throughout their area. While the idea is not new to the Fellowship, it is new to their area and one individual who established three jail boxes within his district was so successful that he was able to provide the A.A. meetings at his county jail with a three-month supply of literature. Then an A.A. volunteered to design the jail boxes so that there would be some uniformity to them. Each month, more and more of these boxes were being established, and the committee felt that a letter of introduction describing the purpose and need should be written. These boxes allow individual A.A. members to take a more active role in carrying the message to the alcoholic behind the walls. Nickels, dimes and quarters quickly add up to dollars and it takes only a few dollars to purchase any of A.A.'s books. Several A.A.s in this area have purchased literature and written the address of their home group on the inside cover of the book.

The Northern California H&I Committee, which started the pink can idea many years ago, reiterates the idea that providing clear information is important. Pink Cans: Small Change Brings Big Results https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/newsletters/en_box459_oct-nov06.pdf

In New York City, there is an annual fundraiser held to supplement Pink Can contributions.

A speaker at an area convention once inquired, "How many of you have ever been in prison?" About 100 people raised their hands. The speaker looked around. "How many of you should have been in prison," he asked, and everyone in the crowded room stood up. "That," says a member, "should say what our commitment is all about."

In Tennessee, one member adopted the pink can idea and added the slogan "Big Bucks for Big Books" on the cans. She shared this with the groups across the state and many also implemented the idea. Many groups found that when the can was passed around or placed by the coffeepots, donations seemed more generous and more frequent.

In Southwest Texas, Area 68, the Big Book Buy Back Program is a successful corrections committee funding effort conducted by many groups, districts, and areas, as well as at local Alcoholics Anonymous events. A table can be set up at a Corrections Facilities Conference or other corrections event and contributions are taken in the amount of the current cost of one Big Book. That amount is then contributed to the various entities to be used for the Corrections Literature Fund for people in custody.

How a New Correctional Facilities Group Is Listed at GSO

Group listing assumes that the new group has the cooperation of the Correctional Facilities administration.

1. Complete the New Correctional Facilities Group Information Form.
2. Upon receipt of the completed New Correctional Facilities Group Information Form, the General Service Office will send a Correctional Facilities Group Handbook, a complimentary package of literature that includes a copy of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, for use in the group, and information regarding the Corrections Correspondence Service.
3. The General Service Office will assign a Corrections Group Service Number. This number is to be used when corresponding with the General Service Office or in ordering literature.

Suggested Ways to Use the Softcover Big Book to Carry the Message

1. It could be used as part of an initial contact with prison agencies when forming a new group, or discussing a group already formed within the facility.
2. The softcover Big Book and an order form might be included as part of a literature display at corrections committee meetings.
3. When appropriate, encourage “outside” group participation as a kind of Twelfth Step work by suggesting that groups purchase one or more softcover Big Books to be given to members in correctional facilities.
4. The A.A. member could perhaps give a copy of the softcover Big Book as a sponsorship gift, or as a gift for the incarcerated person’s A.A. anniversary.
5. For easy reference while attending meetings on the “outside,” the A.A. member might present the softcover edition to the individual upon release from prison.
6. The outside A.A. contact could initiate a new project in the area to place a softcover Big Book in the hands of each member behind the walls, and when possible, coordinate this effort with the local intergroup, central office, district committee, and area committee.

Suggested Ways to Use Audiovisual Material to Carry the Message

1. Audiovisual material could be used as part of an initial contact with prison agencies when forming a new group, or discussing a group already formed within the facility.
2. Audiovisual material and order forms could be used as part of a tabletop display at Corrections Committee meetings, Regional Forums, area assemblies, and local conventions.

3. A.A. members could give audiovisual materials to correctional facilities libraries or individuals as a gift for an A.A. anniversary. These audiovisuals could encourage participation in A.A. meetings and programs for those with literacy problems.

Please note: Complimentary copies of audiovisual materials are available for correctional facilities groups and correctional facilities libraries from GSO.

Please see the list of audiovisual material is at the back of this book.

Links to the Resources portal to two helpful pages are provided.

1. Resources/Media Library <https://www.aa.org/resources/media>
2. Resources/Downloadable Videos <https://www.aa.org/downloadable-videos>
3. General Service Conference Committee on Corrections and trustees' Committee on Corrections History and Actions Highlights. These are available from GSO upon request.

A.A. Newsletters

Box 4-5-9, A.A.'s quarterly newsletter, often contains a section on corrections. A copy of a recent *Box 4-5-9* is in the Corrections Kit. Additional issues can be found at <https://www.aa.org/box-459>.

The newsletter *Sharing from Behind the Walls* contains excerpts from letters received at GSO, and is distributed by local corrections committees to A.A. groups behind the walls. Many A.A. groups in correctional facilities put out their own newsletter.

Sample Communications via Phone, Written Correspondence and Credential Letters

Introduction

For many corrections committees, initial contact with prison officials is made by telephone and letter and/or email usually with a follow-up visit. The personal approach is the best.

In this section you will find a sample telephone contact and sample letters used by corrections committees. The most effective telephone calls and letters include some or all of the following elements:

Information About A.A.—The A.A. Preamble can be quoted, or a few sentences can describe what A.A. is and what it can and cannot do. Many letters include literature such as “A.A. at a Glance,” “Information on Alcoholics Anonymous,” “If You Are a Professional,” and “A.A. in Your Community.”

A Request to Cooperate with Corrections Professionals in Establishing an A.A. Meeting in the Facility—An A.A. contact can be suggested, giving the local or area corrections committee mailing address, or that of an intergroup/central office. (Many letters explain that outside speakers are available and interested in helping to start an A.A. meeting on the inside.) You might work with local CPC committees.

Information About the Traditions, Making Clear What A.A. Does and Does Not Do—Clarifications of the Traditions is particularly important when being asked to provide letters

of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, etc. With permission from local prisons, corrections committees can invite those in custody to conventions and roundups.

Reminder: The following material is presented as guide material only. These form letters (and the telephone contact) are just samples intended to give you a “jumping-off” point; they may be modified to suit the needs of your own area.

Guide Letters are available from GSO electronically upon request. E-mail corrections@aa.org.

***Sample Introductory Phone Call with Facility Officials
(To: Warden/Sheriff/Chief of Police /Chaplain/Counselor/
Program Coordinator/Reentry Coordinator)***

Corrections Committee Member: Hello, Warden_____. My name is _____ . I'm a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. As you may know, A.A. is a fellowship of men and women who, by sharing their experience, strength and hope, are able to recover from the disease of alcoholism. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help others to recover from alcoholism.

Warden: I am somewhat familiar with A.A.; I am aware of A.A. in my community and in my work.

Corrections Committee Member: Well, good. I'm calling to explore with you the possibility of setting up an A.A. group in your prison.

Warden: Please go on.

Corrections Committee Member: Okay. First, as you probably know, recent statistics show that over _____ percent of those in detention were either drunk or had been drinking just prior to committing the crime. The rate of recidivism, however, for people who have joined A.A. in prison and continued to stay sober in A.A. when released, drops by _____ percent.

Warden: Some of my colleagues have told me about the success of A.A.

Corrections Committee Member: So, it's an asset to a correctional facility to have an A.A. group. May I send you some A.A. literature; and after you have had a chance to look at it, meet and talk further about setting up an A.A. group?

Warden: Fine. I'll call you or you can call me in a few weeks, and we'll set a date.

Can you provide me with information on your clearance process, orientations and/or security training that I may review? (These procedures vary in each correctional facility).

Corrections Committee Member: Thanks. I'll look forward to meeting with you.

Note: If you encounter any resistance from the corrections officer, do not press him or her further. Courteously end the conversation, and then follow up with a letter, enclosing A.A. literature.

*Sample Letter/Email to Warden/Sheriff/Chief of Police
About Starting an A.A. Group in a Prison, Jail,
or Youth Detention Center*

Dear _____,

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help each other with their common problem of alcohol.

We are writing to you regarding the A.A. communities desire to work with you to create an A.A. program for your facility.

Currently we are:

Note: Any programs/groups which are currently operational in the jails and prisons in the area/town/city/state or federal facility which is nearby. Include a small synopsis of the current programs along with any supportive statements or comments from the jail administrators.

A four-step program is being used at two facilities in your state-an Adult Transition Center and at another Correctional Center. Our objective is to help provide you with an effective A. A program for the people in custody who had problems with alcohol and might be alcoholic. Our role is to coordinate this process and help make this a successful program of recovery.

We would also like to highlight the other activities offered by A.A. which may assist the AA members in custody during their incarceration and as they transition to the community.

Correctional Correspondence Service, Prerelease Contact Program/Bridge the Gap/Re-entry Programs (please note what is available in the respective area

A.A. Literature (AAWS/GV-LV) paper copies and on digital tablets

A.A. Meeting Guide App

Often times, people in custody may need a community of support to help them as they identify the issues and steps, they need to take to address alcoholism. Through the A.A Meetings, Correctional Correspondence Service and Prerelease Contact Program, we can be a part of the community of support for the alcoholic inmate.

We can be reached at

*Sample Letter/Email Inviting Prison Officials
To a Corrections Workshop*

Dear _____:

The _____ Area/District/C.O./Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous will hold a corrections workshop for A.A. members who are interested in helping confined A.A.s maintain sobriety through the A.A. program of recovery from alcoholism.

We would be delighted if you agree to take part in a panel discussion on the subject of _____. This panel will be held from _____ p.m. to _____ p.m. on _____. Some of the other panelists will be _____, _____, and _____. A preliminary program for this workshop is enclosed.

As you know, because of the cooperation of so many corrections personnel, A.A. is now carrying its message of recovery to A.A. members who are confined in more than _____ use current statistics correctional facilities including state prisons, federal detention centers, provincial institutions local jails, immigration facilities and juvenile facilities and indigenous healing lodges throughout the United States and Canada. A.A. is not affiliated with any other organization or institution.

The _____ panel of our workshop would be greatly enhanced by the addition of your insight and professional experience with the incarcerated population. Please let us know by _____ if you will join us.

Sincerely yours,

Encl.: Preliminary program

*Sample Letter/Email to a Prison Administrator
From an A.A. Member Who Wishes to Visit a Person in Custody*

Dear (Prison Administrator):

My name is _____. I am a recovered alcoholic and a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. For the past _____, I have been corresponding with _____, number _____, sharing information about my sobriety through A.A.

With your permission, I would like to visit (him/her) on a (weekly/ monthly) basis. The purpose of such visits would be to share my experience, strength and hope regarding the A.A. program of recovery from alcoholism. (A.A. is not affiliated with any other organization or institution.)

Of course, I understand that if you grant me visitation rights, I will fully comply with all the rules of your facility.

I look forward to hearing from you. In the meantime, if you need any further information, please let us know.

Sincerely yours,

Telephone Number(s)

*Sample Letter /Email Inviting Key Prison Officials to
Correctional Facilities A.A. Group Anniversary Celebration*

Dear (Administrator/Key Official):

The honor of your presence is requested at the Fourth Anniversary Celebration of the _____ Correctional Facility A.A. Group, which, as you know, will take place on _____ at _____ p.m.

We would be delighted to have you come and join us for the festivities.

Sincerely yours,

R.S.V.P.

Note: Follow up the event with a letter of appreciation for participation, or a letter of regret and sharing news of the event.

Sample Credential Letters

Following are two sample “Letters of Credential” written by a non-A.A. prison administrator. If you need to enlist the help of a local A.A. prison official, a letter *along these lines* may be helpful.

Dear Director:

I’m writing this letter from two vantage points: first, as one of your coworkers in corrections; and second, as a nonalcoholic member of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc.

Nearly every one of us is trying to find ways to cope with the ever-increasing numbers of people coming to prison, and as we struggle to implement creative and innovative alternatives and diversions from prison, I am convinced we can make more effective use of some of the long-standing programs that may get overlooked or forgotten with the current pressures. One of these programs, of course, is Alcoholics Anonymous. This usually involves volunteer members of A.A. visiting frequently at our prisons, and I’m sure you, as I, have experienced varying degrees of success with volunteers. Most of you already have ongoing A.A. programs in your institutions, but for those of you who don’t, I would encourage you to examine the feasibility of instituting groups. There have been occasions where groups have been started in prisons and, either by a lack of outside sponsor support or some untoward incident, the program has been terminated. Knowing the potential impact for good that Alcoholics Anonymous represents, I would encourage you to reinstitute the program if that is the case.

The General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. will be glad to assist you and your staff in providing information, literature, and establishing contact with local A.A. groups for sponsorship of prison groups. Just contact the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc., P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY10163, (212) 870-3400. I am taking the liberty of enclosing a pamphlet that can give you some basic insight into the program.

There is a genuine effort on the part of outside sponsors today to understand that you and your wardens, as administrators, have the responsibility for running the prisons. All they want is an opportunity to bring the message of sobriety to those incarcerated persons who are interested in coming to grips with the problem of alcoholism. I have seen it work too many times to deny that it is an effective way of keeping the alcoholic out of prison.

Very truly yours,

Dear Sheriff:

I'm writing to you from two different, but closely allied, standpoints. First, as a co-worker in the criminal justice system and second, as a nonalcoholic member of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc.

You know better than I how many of your persons in custody are there as a result of alcoholism time after time. Many of you have already enlisted the support of local A.A. groups to help some find their way to sobriety. Admittedly, it is not for every afflicted alcoholic, but the program has had too long a track record of success to ignore it as one way to help reduce the ever-rising jail population.

If you don't have A.A. programs in your jail now, I would encourage you to give it a try. There are responsible sober members of Alcoholics Anonymous in your community who are willing to act as sponsors for the program in your jail. The General Service Board staff will be more than willing to furnish you with information and literature, and put you in contact with local groups if you are interested in initiating the program in your jail. Just contact the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc., P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163, (212) 870-3400. I am taking the liberty of enclosing a pamphlet that can give you some basic insight into the program.

I hope this letter has not been too presumptuous on my part, but after 30 years of working in corrections, I have become more and more convinced that we need to reexamine some of the older programs with a track record of success, even as we institute new ones in our effort to reduce crime in cost-effective ways, and this program will not cost you any money.

Very truly yours,

Sample Letter/Email of Introduction

This is a sample letter developed by one area to be used to introduce the local Alcoholics Anonymous committee to a local correctional facility. The area suggests it as a way to introduce the four-step process to the prison/jail staff.

Warden or Designee
Anywhere Correctional Center
1000 Anywhere Street
P.O. Box 1234
Anywhere, STATE 60000

Dear Warden or Designee

The Alcoholics Anonymous program has a long track record of success behind the walls and on the outside. Warden Clinton Duffy first invited Alcoholics Anonymous to start a group at San Quentin, California, in 1942, and watched the recidivism rate of 80 percent drop to 20 percent for members of the group.

A four-step process is being used at two facilities in your state: an adult transition center and at another correctional center. Our objective is to help provide you with an effective A.A. program for those who have had problems with alcohol and might be alcoholic. My role is to coordinate this process and help your surrounding A.A. community establish a successful program.

We would like to help you and your staff create an A.A. program for your facility. Our purpose is to be of assistance to you with this project. We also want to provide you and your staff with a documented plan of action.

The four-step process is:

1. Meet with the warden to learn about the facility and its needs.
2. With this information, the members of Alcoholics Anonymous will develop the appropriate A.A. program.
3. This proposal will be submitted to you, the warden, for your review, modification and approval.
4. Once signed, together we will begin to implement the process.

Respectfully yours,

Area Corrections Committee Chairperson

cc: Assistant Warden
Local Corrections Committee Chairperson
Corrections Committee member

*Sample Letter for Program
Approval at new Facility*

We welcome the opportunity and challenge of providing an A.A. program in this new facility. The openness and receptivity of you and your staff, that we have met, is excellent. This cooperative relationship will create a climate in which we should be able to develop a sound program. We pledge to do our very best to make that happen.

Please sign and return a copy for approval.

Submitted by Coordinator

Date:

Approved by Warden

Date

*A Sample
Correctional Facility Fact Sheet*

Date: _____ Facility: _____

Present at conference: _____

Type of facility: _____

Population Total: Current _____ Planned _____ Date _____

Population composition: Male _____ Female _____

Other (please identify) _____

Black _____ Hispanic _____ White _____ Other _____

Youth _____ Language barrier _____ Deaf _____

Average stay _____

Estimated population with drinking problems _____

Any population that should be excluded from meetings:

Space available _____ Location _____

Larger speaker meetings _____

Comments: _____

Schedule options (time for count, church, meals, recreation, etc.): _____

Criteria for A.A. Corrections Committee Representatives to attend meetings: _____

Formerly Incarcerated _____

Appeal process _____

Temporary _____

Permanent _____

Number of volunteers per meeting: _____

Procedure for entering the facility: _____

Special restrictions (for example, keys, wallets, purses, cell phones.)

Contact persons:

Corrections Committee member's name and phone: _____

Institution name and phone: _____

Materials and supplies to be utilized:

Literature rack: visitors' room _____ meeting room _____

Temporary contact cards: _____

Discharge packets: _____

Restrictions: _____

Refreshments or coffee: Yes _____ No _____

How provided, if allowed: _____

Observations and special considerations: _____

Program plan or follow-up will be submitted by

Corrections Committee rep _____

No later than _____

A.A. Program Activities In Correctional Facilities

Carrying the message into correctional facilities offers A.A.s throughout the U.S. and Canada opportunities for important local Twelfth Step work. The suggestions that follow highlight some of the challenges and shared experience from A.A.s who regularly carry the message into correctional facilities and work closely with corrections administrators and staff.

Each type of correctional facility within the US and Canada whether city, county, state, federal or provincial require different levels of communication with administrators and clearance to visit.

Make an effort to become familiar with all the correctional facilities in your area.

1. Be regular and reliable; fully comply with prison security checks and clearance procedures.
2. Create ongoing personal contacts with institutional officials and community members who work with alcoholics in the criminal justice system.
3. Establish clear boundaries with persons in custody and prison officials about what A.A. can and cannot do.
4. Maintain regular communication and cooperation between local PI, CPC, B.T.G., and H&I committees in order to keep up with constantly changing prison procedures, personnel, and the population itself.
5. Make sure all outside members and all clearance applications are processed efficiently and let members know about any required safety training.
6. Provide clear and accurate information for local A.A. members regarding facility requirements for volunteering, such as length of sobriety, criminal record, etc.
7. Conduct orientation sessions, special programs, or workshops for local A.A. members interested in doing corrections work.
8. Ensure that A.A. literature in English, Spanish and French, including *Living Sober*, *Came to Believe*, and the AA Grapevine and La Viña magazine, is available; replenish A.A. literature regularly.
9. Make A.A. DVDs and Grapevine CDs available at meetings and in facility libraries.
10. Use prison TV system for PSAs/videos, and to announce A.A. meeting where/when information.
11. Provide information about correctional facilities A.A. success stories.
12. Include information about singleness of purpose, open vs. closed meetings, etc., each time an A.A. meeting begins. Read Primary Purpose Statement Card <https://www.aa.org/primary-purpose-statement-card>
13. Cooperate with N.A. members to share meeting time/space when practical, while maintaining separation of the two Fellowships.
14. Present information regularly to everyone about the Corrections Correspondence Service. Provide the Corrections Correspondence Service Insider Request Form F-73 and complimentary envelopes (available through GSO at corrections desk).
15. Explain to those in custody and staff that A.A. does not mandate attendance or take attendance, but a facility might.

16. Keep lines of communication open with facility staff to avoid confusion about any A.A. practices that might conflict with prison policy.
17. Stress the importance of attending an A.A. meeting the first day of release.
18. The A.A. Meeting Guide App provides instant information regarding the time and location of local A.A. and A.A. meetings. If attendance is a part of a case management or transitional plan, the A.A. app can be easily downloaded onto a smart phone or tablet during a meeting with a client. The A.A. Meeting Guide app will identify the A.A. meetings which are near an individual's home or place of employment in addition to providing directions on how to get to the meeting and even placing it on the individual's calendar.
19. Maintain contact with those persons newly released, arranging for local sponsorship, taking them to meetings, providing contact names and telephone numbers, and introducing them to local A.A. members at meetings.
20. Wherever possible, for people newly released who will be moving to distant locations, provide contact names and telephone numbers for their new destinations.
21. Develop a steady supply of A.A. volunteers willing to serve as temporary sponsors and prerelease contacts.
22. Establish Bridging the Gap/Prerelease Contact programs at local jails.

An A.A. Program Plan By an Area Corrections Committee

The following plan is to provide an outside A.A. program for an institution.

The correctional center is an institution dedicated to treatment. The objective of the program is to reduce the rate of recidivism. Confined alcoholics are currently holding inside A.A. meetings on Thursday nights. All are attending and the meetings are mandatory. The attendees are first-time prisoners who choose to participate in the program in return for a reduced sentence. After serving here, they are released to a community-based program.

Meeting Schedule:

Start date: 7-15-04

Thursday: Evenings at 7:30 – 8:30 p.m. on a weekly basis. A.A. Corrections Committee (AACC) Reps will be asked to arrive at the institution by 7:15 p.m. and those members in custody members should be called for the meeting at the same time so that the meeting can begin on time.

Coverage: Attached is the schedule, by building, of coverage for the third quarter. There are 22 groups total. One building has four groups of 80 members each. Each of the buildings has two groups of 40 members each. Initially there were not enough volunteers to cover the 22 meetings, but we are working diligently to garner more permanent Thursday volunteers. As more volunteers become available, coverage will be expanded to the remaining groups. When there are more volunteers, then the four groups of 80 can be split into upper

and lower, giving eight groups of 40; the groups can have a dedicated AACC rep, rather than sharing. For the Thursday groups we cannot yet cover, see request for Saturday speaker meetings below.

Requests:

Saturday: Afternoons at 12:30 p.m. there will be weekly speaker meetings. Monthly meetings were discussed as a possibility, but the Saturday meeting was cleared. We are requesting weekly specifically to provide speaker meetings where there is not coverage for the Thursday evening meetings.

Tuesday: One volunteer who has a permanent clearance strongly prefers Tuesdays. Could Tuesday be available for A.A. groups for one of the buildings for two months, starting 7/20/2004?

Type of meeting: Open meetings, available to anyone who is interested.

Method of announcing to the population: Meetings are currently being held inside. Continue the methods in place.

Facility procedure for attendance: Mandatory, this is part of the treatment program the person in custody has signed up for to get a reduced sentence.

Role of AACC Reps: Provide assistance, support and guidance to members in the development of a sound and effective A.A. program. Conduct the A.A. meetings when present, and provide guidance in how to conduct meetings when not there. Assist people in making successful transition to the community when released, within the bounds allowed by regulations.

Literature: Only A.A. literature will be used in meetings. Material will be provided by outside A.A. members and carried in.

Self-support: Cost of materials and supplies, beyond what the Corrections Committee is already providing, will be handled by outside A.A. members.

Handling of funds: Not allowed at this time. If a procedure were to become available for doing this, group contributions could be collected and literature purchased.

Cancellation procedures: Designated parties in the institution or the community will be called if meetings cannot be held due to problems in the facility or if AACC reps cannot attend.

Staff roles: Coordinate A.A. program activities, process AACC rep applications, and process and train AACC reps.

Clearance: The coordinator will send notification of who is submitting applications. If A.A. applications are received from anyone else, please notify the person in charge immediately, and send a copy of clearance letters.

Permanent: Only a handful of A.A. volunteers are cleared at this time. We were delighted to see that the last volunteer was cleared in two months and hope this can continue.

Temporary: Four visits per year would be quite useful if they could be in four consecutive months rather than quarterly. There are a large number of temporary volunteers that visited on June 24, 2004, and who cannot return, either for two months or until permanent clearance is achieved.

Speaker: AACC reps already cleared at other facilities; names will be provided by the Corrections Coordinator.

Singleness of purpose: The primary purpose of any A.A. group is to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Transition to the community: We will use the area and district A.A. service structure to assure contact and follow-up with members who are released from the facility to the community;

Please provide inside members with Prerelease Contact sign up form <https://www.aa.org/aa-corrections-prerelease-contact-information-inside>

Primary Contacts: (include phone numbers)

Institution: Assistant Warden Johnson (000) 000-0000

Corrections Committee Coordinator: Jane S. (000) 000-0000

Corrections Committee Reps:

1. John Doe (000) 000-0000
2. Jane Doe (000) 000-0000
3. Jim Smith (000) 000-0000

Observations and recommendations: _____

Cooperation Between A.A. Committees: Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Treatment, and Corrections

Introduction

To recapitulate the A.A. Guidelines:

- The purpose of a corrections committee is to coordinate the work of individual A.A. members and groups who are interested in carrying the A.A. message of recovery to alcoholics in correctional facilities, and to set up means to help the person in custody transition from the facility into the A.A. community.
- The purpose of the PI committee is to carry the A.A. message to the general public through the media appropriate websites, social media platforms, (newspapers, magazines, radio, televisions, etc.), also to alcoholics through those who are in a position to help them, e.g., wife, husband, doctor. Members of the PI committees frequently visit schools and talk to students about A.A.
- The purpose of the CPC committee is to carry the message by establishing a cooperative relationship with the professional community. A.A. is 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 A.A. members in the community and paid alcoholism workers, the professionals give A.A. credit, A.A. members return the compliment, and sick alcoholics win—they get the help needed from both.

In keeping with our Traditions, who or what committee carries the message is not important as long as the A.A. message of recovery is carried to the still-suffering alcoholics, whether they be on the outside or the inside. These committees can cooperate in many ways, as long as the job gets done by someone. Some areas have institutions committees covering both corrections and treatment work; others have dissolved and re-formed as two separate committees. In other situations, committees hold joint meetings with intergroups or central offices.

It is important that there be liaison between the various committees, for example, sharing newsletters and minutes. Each committee becomes better informed about the thinking and experience of the other committees and therefore better equipped to generate ideas for effective cooperation and enhanced communication.

Examples of Cooperation

1. Occasionally, a CPC committee might establish the initial contact with a correctional facility. In any case, liaison with CPC can often result in more effective outreach to the legal profession and the helping professional attached to a facility—for example, the social worker or probation officer.
2. In some areas, public information committees sponsor luncheons for prison administrators and other corrections personnel. Physicians, lawyers, and other professionals, together with business leaders, are also invited to meet and share with corrections personnel.

3. Some treatment committees share lists of outside sponsors who are willing to take former patients or those who were in custody to A.A. meetings on the outside, helping them to make the transition to a local home group.

CPC, public information, and treatment committees undoubtedly will overlap in many areas; however, too much information about A.A. is preferable to a lack of knowledge and understanding by those who are in a position to help us carry the A.A. message of hope and recovery to the still-suffering alcoholic.

Working Together

A.A. pamphlets, e.g., “This Is A.A.,” “How Members Cooperate with Professionals,” “A Message to Corrections Professionals,” “A.A. in Correctional Facilities,” “If You Are a Professional,” could be sent by the corrections committee to prison administrators or given to the corrections committee to take with them when they visit the prison administrator to talk about setting up a new group. The Video AA for Legal and Correctional Professionals can be shown. <https://www.aa.org/A.A.-Video-for-Legal-and-Corrections-Professionals>

Public information luncheons, which are held in some areas, invite people from the business community as well as professional people. Wardens, prison administrators, and corrections personnel can also be invited to these public information events.

Prerelease A.A. Contacts

Introduction

Past experience has shown that attending an A.A. meeting on the outside on the day of release from prison is one of the most effective tools in making a sober transition and maintaining continued sobriety in the free world. It is strongly recommended that anyone in custody who is an A.A. member have an A.A. contact on the outside (preferably with at least one year’s sobriety and of the same sex) who contacts and arranges to meet him or her on the day of release to help in “Bridging the Gap” between the institution and A.A. on the outside.

This section of the workbook deals with guidelines for A.A. members who want to participate in this type of service, sometimes referred to as “Prerelease” programs and sometimes as “Bridging the Gap” programs.

Guidelines for Prerelease A.A. Contacts

The following guidelines for A.A. contacts have been drawn from the past experience of many A.A. members who are involved in this rewarding form of Twelfth Step work.

1. As in all types of sponsorship in A.A., prerelease contacts share their experience, strength and hope with people soon to be released.
2. We have found that it is better for people with the same gender identity to work together.
3. If possible, an A.A. contact should be a member of an A.A. group in the vicinity of the returning person’s residence upon release.

4. As in all Twelfth Step work, it is suggested that two A.A. members meet the individual upon release.
5. It is suggested that volunteers attend a corrections workshop when first signing up to volunteer.

How Prerelease A.A. Contact Works

Please read the suggestions/procedures in the A.A. Corrections Prerelease Contact Information pamphlet for the outside A.A. member <https://www.aa.org/aa-corrections-prerelease-contact-information-outside>

A.A. contact is of utmost importance in corrections work. Many corrections committees find it helpful to compile a list of contacts. When a person is to be released, most corrections committees attempt to locate an A.A. member and link the individual to their hometown A.A. group. However, when that person’s point of destination is a distant city, sometimes there is slippage in contact and follow-up.

Some corrections committees link homebound people by:

- Arranging for a local contact
- Giving that person contact names and telephone numbers
- Providing the recently released person with meeting information
- Helping the individual contact A.A. in their hometown through the local intergroup or central office

Following are examples of what local corrections committees have done to arrange prerelease A.A. contacts or interim sponsorship.

EXAMPLE 1

One General Service Area Committee has worked it out with a local corrections center that the social worker or counselor at the center writes the following letter to the institutions committee every three months:

Dear (Institutions or Corrections Committee Chairperson):

The following people from _____ are willing to have their names placed on your list to obtain outside A.A. contacts. The information includes their names, numbers, probable parole/release dates, and points of destination.

Name	Number	Date of Release/Parole	Destination
John Brown	#123456	October 1992	Harrah, OK
Martin Jones	#234567	January 1993	Austin, TX
Rafael James	#345678	August 1992	Portland, OR

The information above is given with the permission of the person who is in custody, and it should remain confidential. All persons named are residents of _____ at this time. Thank you for your assistance in obtaining contacts.

Yours truly,
(Prison social worker or counselor)

EXAMPLE 2

The following is a volunteer information form designed for local A.A. members who wish to serve as prerelease A.A. contacts (one year sobriety suggested):

I would like to be a prerelease contact for a person in custody.

(Please Print)

Full Name _____

Address _____

_____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____ Home Group Name _____

Area _____ District _____

Signature _____ Date _____

MAIL TO: (Local Corrections Committee, Institutions Committee, Area Committee, or Intergroup)

EXAMPLE 3

When a person due for release writes GSO for help, the staff member contacts the nearest area corrections committee chairperson and also supplies the Meeting Guide App flyer and/or the contact information to the local intergroup or central office. Copies of the letter are then forwarded to these local service entities for follow-up.

Date:

Name/Address:

Dear:

Thank you for informing us of your approximate release date (_____) and the location where you will be upon release (_____).

We have forwarded your request for a prerelease contact to the area corrections GSO Committee chairperson in or near the town in which you will be living upon your release. Hopefully, they will get someone locally to contact you about A.A. meetings.

I am enclosing a copy of the Meeting Guide App flyer and a number to the local intergroup/central office in your area. If you do not hear from an individual, use these resources. As you may know, one of the more slippery places in the journey to sobriety is between the door to the facility and the nearest A.A. meeting or group. So, please make contact with A.A. as soon as you are released.

Good luck and best wishes.

In fellowship,
Corrections Coordinator

Enclosures: Questions & Answers on Sponsorship; Grapevine;
Sharing From Behind the Walls

EXAMPLE 4

Below is a sample of a response to a confined alcoholic from the local corrections committee/institutions committee, central office, or group GSR:

Dear _____:

We received your name from the General Service Office US/Canada. We are enclosing a the Meeting Guide App flyer and information to the local intergroup or central office.

The A.A. members in this area wish you well and look forward to seeing you at our meetings. Please contact me when you arrive for any further information you may need. We will be very happy to take you to a meeting.

Sincerely,

Corrections Committee Member

Telephone No.

Information Letter About Prerelease A.A. Contact

Dear (Prison Official/Parole Officer/Social Worker):

I would like to take a minute of your time to tell you about A.A.'s program of prerelease A.A. contacts, which is in effect in many correctional facilities throughout the United States and Canada.

Briefly, an A.A. member on the outside corresponds with an individual in detention who is soon to be released. A one-to-one supportive relationship is established as the outside A.A. member guides that person through the days of prerelease.

On the day of release, the individual is met by the contact at their point of destination, and the A.A. member takes them to an A.A. meeting on the outside. In this way, the person is helped to make a sober transition to the outside world.

This program has proved beneficial; experience has shown that an individual who makes A.A. contact on the outside prior to release is less likely to become a "repeater" in the prison system.

If you would like more information about this or any other aspect of Alcoholics Anonymous, please call me and I will be happy to talk with you.

Sincerely yours,

Corrections Committee Member

Telephone No(s).

Prerelease Contact Information (For Persons in Custody)

The following form needs to be filled out by the inside A.A. member who is within 3 to 6 months of their release date. The form can be scanned, and the blank space is open on each for personalization with your return address. Electronic copies (via e-mail) are available from GSO upon request, and can be downloaded and printed from GSO's website (aa.org) at the following the:

http://www.aa.org/pdf/products/f-163_AA CorrectionsPreRelease_Inside.pdf

<p>For AAs on the</p> <p> INSIDE</p> <p>A.A. CORRECTIONS PRERELEASE CONTACT INFORMATION</p> <p>CONNECTING INSIDE A.A. MEMBERS TO THE OUTSIDE A.A. COMMUNITY</p>	<p>Excerpt from the Grapevine article “The Sweet Smell of Coffee,” from April 2020 written by Michael T. a person in custody:</p> <p><i>“I’ve been incarcerated almost 17 years now. I may never see the outside world again. I have good days and bad ones. But don’t we all? I know I must continue to change. For me, sobriety is a gift that’s earned every single day, just like most people earn a living on the outside world. Each and every hour, day, month and year that I don’t pick up that first drink, I earn that gift.</i></p> <p>Dear A.A. Members,</p> <p>In your area A.A. can arrange a Prerelease Contact for those soon to be released. If you are interested you can be matched upon release to an A.A. member in your home community.</p> <p>This A.A. member will take you to A.A. meetings, introduce you around, and help you get acquainted and comfortable in A.A.</p> <p>Your Prerelease Contact is temporary only. They are there to support you, answer questions, and explain the A.A. program of recovery. They will not provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or other such services. You will hear suggestions for sobriety and will be introduced to basic recovery tools — like sponsorship, a day at a time, A.A. literature and A.A.’s Twelve Steps.</p> <p>Past experience has shown that attending an A.A. meeting as soon as possible after release is key to making a sober transition to life outside prison. Many of us have been where you are and know that the program of A.A. and its fellowship can do for you what it has done for us and countless others.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p>
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Complete the attached Prerelease form and mail it to the address indicated. Please do this three to six months prior to your release. The Corrections committee will then match you up with an A.A. Prerelease contact in the community where you will be living. That person will write to you with information on how to contact him or her once you are released.

A.A. Corrections Prerelease Contact Program Procedures

1. As an inside A.A. member you are eligible for this program if you are within three to six months of your release date.
2. Please fill in the attached form and mail it to the Corrections committee. You will find the address at the bottom of the Application form on page 3.
3. The Prerelease Contact will write to you to confirm contact. If the Prerelease Contact fails to contact you within a few weeks, you should write again.
4. You and the Prerelease Contact will set up a meeting at the time of your release. Please provide, on the prerelease form, such information as date of release, when you will arrive in the local area, and an address and phone number where you may be reached.
5. The Prerelease Contact will meet you at an agreed upon time and place to help you adjust to attending your first meetings in the local community.
6. Please remember that the Prerelease Contact is there to make your transition from "inside" to "outside" A.A. meetings as comfortable as possible. There is no "schedule"; it is up to you and your Contact to decide together when the time is right for the Prerelease Contact to rotate on to help someone new.

Prerelease Request

I am within six months of my release date. I am requesting an A.A. Contact who will provide a link for me to the A.A. community through transportation to meetings and introductions to other A.A.s.

Person in custody Name: _____

Gender Identity _____
(e.g. Male, Female, Non-binary)

Doc Number: _____

Doc Mailing Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Releasing to: (Town or Area): _____

Date of Release: _____

Address after release: _____

Phone No.: _____

Please mail to:

Prerelease Contact Information (For A.A. Members)

The following form needs to be filled out by the outside A.A. member who is interested in participating in this service. The form should be returned to the corrections committee chair in the area where the member can serve. Electronic copies (via e-mail) are available from GSO upon request, and can be downloaded and printed from GSO's website (aa.org) at the following link:

http://www.aa.org/pdf/products/f-162_AA Corrections PreRelease_Outside.pdf

The image shows a two-page document. The left page is a title page with a vertical decorative border on the left side containing the words 'SERVICES' and 'PROGRAMS' in a stylized font. At the top right of the left page, it says 'For AAs on the' above a circular logo, with the word 'OUTSIDE' written vertically to the right of the logo. The main title in the center is 'A.A. CORRECTIONS PRERELEASE CONTACT INFORMATION'. At the bottom, it reads 'CONNECTING INSIDE A.A. MEMBERS TO THE OUTSIDE A.A. COMMUNITY'. The right page is a letter addressed to an A.A. member, explaining the program and providing instructions on how to use the service.

For AAs on the

OUTSIDE

**A.A. CORRECTIONS
PRERELEASE
CONTACT INFORMATION**

CONNECTING
INSIDE A.A. MEMBERS
TO THE OUTSIDE
A.A. COMMUNITY

Dear A.A. member,

The A.A. Corrections Prerelease Contact Program connects the A.A. member being released from prison with Alcoholics Anonymous in their community.

When the soon-to-be-released A.A. member writes us, we match that person to a Prerelease Contact in their community. If you are interested in this form of service, we will call you, get the okay, and then send you the name of a contact.

Many A.A.s involved in this service stress the importance of getting the member formerly in custody to a meeting as soon as possible, usually within the first 48 hours after release.

During this time, you help them get acquainted, get phone numbers, perhaps locate a sponsor or home group, and become connected to the local A.A. community. You introduce the newly released member to others in A.A. so they have a broad, healthy base.

An A.A. member who is part of a correctional facilities volunteer program needs to be familiar with, and adhere to, rules that correctional facilities have regarding a volunteer's contact with inside members, both while they are in the facility and after they are released.

If you are willing to be the hand of A.A. when a person in custody reaches out for help, complete the attached A.A. Corrections Contact Form and mail it to the address given.

1

Suggestions for the Prerelease Contact

1. Contact the inside A.A. member by letter within two weeks of being matched and remain in touch with them as their release date approaches.
2. Try to take members formerly in custody to an A.A. meeting within 24 to 48 hours of their release.
3. It is suggested that the first meeting be viewed as a regular Twelfth Step call and that you take another A.A. member with you.
4. Share your experience, strength and hope with the newly released A.A., just as you would with any other person new to A.A. in your community.
5. Review the A.A. Correction Prerelease Contact Information with the member so that there are no misunderstandings.
6. Your job is finished after a sponsor has been found, or when you and the newly released member feel that the member is secure enough for you to move on.
7. Make sure the newly released A.A. receives meeting schedules, phone numbers, and A.A. literature.
8. Encourage newly released A.A.s to attend meetings as often as possible, to find a home group and, most important, to get a sponsor as soon as possible. Let them know that even a temporary sponsor who has time for them now would be acceptable.

A.A. Corrections Prerelease Contact Procedures

1. Inside A.A. members (those held in correctional facilities) are eligible for this program if they have less than six months to serve on their sentence.
2. The person in custody fills out the form and mails it to the Corrections Committee, which is responsible for processing and coordinating all Prerelease Contacts.
3. The outside A.A. writes to the inside A.A. member within two weeks. If the Prerelease Contact fails to make contact, the inside A.A. member should inform the Corrections committee. (Prerelease Contacts may, if they wish, use as their return address that of a local A.A. office.)
4. The inside A.A. member and the outside contact set up a meeting at the time of the member's release. The inside A.A. provides such information as their date of release, arrival time in the local area, and an address and phone number.
5. The Prerelease Contact will meet the newly released A.A. at an agreed upon time and place to help them adjust to attending their first meetings in the local community.
6. The Prerelease Contact and the newly released A.A. will, by working together, know when they both feel the time has come for the Prerelease Contact to move on to someone new.

A.A. Corrections Contact Form

Name: _____

Gender Identity _____
(e.g. Male, Female, Non-binary)

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Daytime Phone: _____

Nighttime Phone: _____

Home Group: _____

Location: _____

Please mail to:

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www.aa.org

F-162

5M – 2/23 (GP)



Remember that:

- It is important that members formerly in custody attend their first A.A. meeting as soon as they are released.
- Our primary purpose is to carry the A.A. message.
- You are not responsible for the member's attitude or actions in or out of meetings.
- It is suggested that you do not loan money or anything of value, or become a personal taxi service.
- It is important to introduce the member formerly in custody to other A.A. members, just as you would any newcomer.
- We are not to act in any reporting or communication capacity regarding the A.A. member and the justice system.

Suggested Reading

"Carrying the Message into Correctional Facilities"

"Where Do I Go From Here?"

A.A. in Prison: A Message of Hope

"A.A. in Correctional Facilities"

"It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell"

"Behind the Walls: A Message of Hope"

"A Message to Corrections Professionals"

Corrections Correspondence Service

Introduction and Description

The Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS) has been one of the most productive ways for individual A.A. members to carry the message to those who are confined. The GSO corrections desk receives approximately 80 letters a week from individuals in detention who wish to receive A.A. literature, A.A. contacts, temporary sponsorship, and correspondence with A.A.s on the outside. The CCS sign up form for the inside A.A. member (F-73) is available at [aa.org https://www.aa.org/corrections-correspondence-service-insider-request-form](https://www.aa.org/corrections-correspondence-service-insider-request-form)

It is difficult for an A.A. member behind the walls to participate in ongoing individual sharing about the A.A. program of recovery, particularly in large prisons without AA meetings. The Corrections Correspondence Service allows inside A.A.s to correspond with outside A.A.s on an individual basis.

Several thousand A.A. members active in local groups are currently writing to people behind the walls. GSO sends the name and address of the inside member who wants to correspond with an outside A.A. member.

The outside A.A. member then makes the first contact.

Some outside A.A. members use a home group post office box number for correspondence. Some A.A. groups are A.A. contacts for many people in custody.

Matches are made between people with the same gender identity.

Sometimes, correspondence is the only opportunity an inside A.A. has to share experience, strength and hope with another A.A. The person inside might be in protective custody or solitary confinement other inside A.A.s could be on a facility waiting list to attend A.A. meetings and may in fact have no inside A.A. groups or meetings to attend.

Corrections committee members can encourage A.A. groups and members to participate in this service. It is suggested that areas and districts hold virtual workshops on a regular annual or semiannual basis. It is also suggested that areas and districts hold virtual workshops on a regular annual or semiannual basis.

Any A.A. member who would like to carry the message in this way can download a sign-up form from the [aa.org](http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/nopage/f-26-corrections-correspondence-a-special-kind-of-aa-service) website at http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/nopage/f-26-corrections-correspondence-a-special-kind-of-aa-service or they can contact the Corrections Desk, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163, or corrections@aa.org.

Guidelines on Corrections Correspondence Service

In addition to observing the rules in institutions regarding mail and correspondence, the following are some suggested guidelines drawn from shared experience to help you when writing to members inside the walls:

1. We introduce ourselves by qualifying briefly in our opening letter.
2. We try to let them know that writing, like all forms of sharing, helps us as much as it helps them.
3. We let them know that they are not alone.

4. Some correspondents prefer to use their group or district P.O. box for receiving mail, rather than their home address. (We match correspondents by a minimum distance of 700 miles).
5. We share sobriety and sobriety only.
6. We have found it best for all concerned if no emotional or romantic involvements develop.
7. If there is a desire to send a gift for a special occasion, we make it an A.A. book, A.A. literature, or Grapevine material. (Before sending literature, see if the facility will allow it. Many correctional facilities will permit those in custody to receive only literature sent directly from the publishers.) Also, some facilities do not allow people in custody to receive stamps or preaddressed, stamped envelopes.
8. In the spirit of the Twelfth Tradition, we respect the anonymity of our correspondents.
9. We encourage “inside” A.A. group activity and stress that first meeting THE DAY the individual leaves confinement.
10. We encourage “inside” correspondents to notify GSO prior to their release so that a prerelease contact from their home community can be arranged. (offer Prerelease Contact Information Form F-163)
11. Thank you for your willingness to share in this most important work.

Corrections Committee

Corrections Correspondence Service Flyers


The following form needs to be filled out by the inside A.A. member who has at least 6 more months to serve. Copies are available from GSO upon request, and can be downloaded and printed from the aa.org website at the following link:

<https://www.aa.org/corrections-correspondence-service-insider-request-form>

<p>Alcoholics Anonymous® www.aa.org</p>	<p>General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. 475 Riverside Drive, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10115 / Telephone: (212) 870-3400</p>																
	<p>Please direct all communications to: P.O. Box 459 Grand Central Station New York, NY 10163 Fax: (212) 870-3003</p>																
<p>Dear A.A. Friend,</p> <p>Thank you for your interest in the Corrections Correspondence Service (C.C.S.) coordinated by G.S.O. This service is intended for incarcerated alcoholics who have at least six more months to serve.</p> <p>If you have an interest in sharing about your experience as it relates to sobriety and problems with alcohol, you can complete the form below and send it in to the Corrections Coordinator at G.S.O. You will be randomly matched to a member with the same gender identity. We have found it best for all concerned if no emotional or romantic involvements develop.</p> <p>If your problem is with issues other than alcohol, we suggest you contact an organization that more specifically deals with your addiction.</p> <p>This service does not provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers or court officials. The service does not assign sponsors; however, once contact is made, an outside A.A. member may be willing to be a sponsor.</p> <p>All here join in sending you wishes for all the best that A.A. has to offer a day at a time.</p> <p>Yours sincerely, Corrections Coordinator</p>																	
<p>Correspondence Form: Please detach and return to General Service Office of A.A.</p> <p>Yes, I have six or more months to serve and would like to share experience regarding recovery from alcoholism with an outside A.A. member by participating in the Corrections Correspondence Service.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Estimated Release Date</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gender Identity</td> <td>(e.g. Male, Female, Non-binary)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Language</td> <td style="text-align: center;">(Circle one) English French Spanish</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Name (First and Last)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Department of Corrections Number</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Facility Name</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Street Address & City</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Province & Postal Code/ State & Zip</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		Estimated Release Date		Gender Identity	(e.g. Male, Female, Non-binary)	Language	(Circle one) English French Spanish	Name (First and Last)		Department of Corrections Number		Facility Name		Street Address & City		Province & Postal Code/ State & Zip	
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F-73 / CCS-2	<p style="text-align: center;">Alcoholics Anonymous® www.aa.org</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Revised 9/22</p>																


The following form needs to be filled out by the outside A.A. member and returned to the corrections desk at GSO. It can be downloaded and printed from the aa.org website at the following link:

<https://www.aa.org/corrections-correspondence-special-kind-aa-service>



Corrections Correspondence

— a special kind
of A.A. Service



CORRESPONDENCE FORM — for Outside A.A. Members Only _____ **CCS-3**

PLEASE PRINT — Return to address below

Gender identity (e.g. Male, Female, Non-binary) _____

How many members in custody are you able to write to?: _____

I can correspond in English French Spanish Other language _____

Name: _____ Phone (office use only): _____
(First and Last)

Address: _____ Email (office use only): _____
(P.O. Box or Street Address, City, State or Province, Postal or Zip Code)

Corrections Desk, General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
Direct: (212) 870-3085 Email: corrections@aa.org Fax: (212) 870-3003 Website: www.aa.org
Please add this email to your contacts to ensure receipt of important messages.

Corrections Correspondence

—a special kind of A.A. Service

I know how important our Twelfth Step work is and I enjoy writing to men who are locked up. It is one of the tools that I use to keep me sober. I myself found A.A. in prison almost 20 years ago. And it hasn't been necessary for me to return to prison since I was released.

—Outside Correspondent

We are in need of A.A. members on the “outside” to correspond with A.A. members in correctional facilities across the U.S. and Canada.

Having prison experience is not a prerequisite — sobriety in A.A. is. People in custody are more interested in learning how we got and stayed sober through A.A.'s Twelve Steps, rather than hearing about time we may have spent in prison.

It is suggested that members correspond with members of the same gender identity. Currently, we receive more requests from people in custody and we appreciate your participation, which will help us to provide this service to all who seek it.

If you would like to share your experience, strength and hope with A.A.s who are confined, please mail the tear-off form to GSO's Corrections Desk, or email the information to corrections@aa.org. (You can also access the form on the Corrections Committee page on our website at www.aa.org/corrections-committees.) The name of a person in custody selected at random from a geographical distance of 700 miles or greater will be sent to you from the General Service Office and you will make the initial contact through the mail.

Those who have participated in this service have found sharing with individuals in custody to be a very gratifying form of Twelfth Step work. We are happy to know there are A.A. members like you willing to help make it possible for the A.A. message to be carried to those on the “inside.”

Guidelines for Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS)

Welcome to one of the most rewarding and rarely mentioned forms of Twelfth Step work.

In the spirit of cooperating with correctional facility requirements for correspondence and mail, here

are some suggested guidelines drawn from shared experience to help you when writing to A.A. members on the “inside”:

To begin, remember that when writing to those in custody, *you must use your last name on the envelope* or it will not be accepted by most institutions. The GSO does not forward CCS mail.

1. We introduce ourselves by qualifying briefly in our opening letter.
2. We try to let individuals know that writing, like all forms of sharing, helps us as much as it helps them.
3. We let the person in custody know that they are not alone.
4. Most correspondents use their home address, since we match correspondents by a distance of 700 miles or greater. Some correspondents ask permission of their A.A. group or intergroup/central office to use the office P.O. Box for receiving mail.
5. We share sobriety and sobriety only.
6. We have found it best for all concerned if no emotional or romantic involvements develop.
7. If there is a desire to send a gift for a special occasion, we make it an A.A. book, A.A. literature, or Grapevine material. (Before sending literature, see if the facility will allow it. Many Correctional Facilities will permit a person in custody to receive only literature sent directly from the publishers.) Also, some facilities do not allow those in custody to receive stamps or preaddressed, stamped envelopes.
8. In the spirit of the Twelfth Tradition, we respect the anonymity of our correspondents.
9. We encourage “inside” A.A. group activity and stress making that first meeting *the day* the individual leaves confinement.
10. We encourage “inside” correspondents to notify GSO prior to their release so that GSO can set up a prerelease contact from their home community

(Visit www.aa.org/aa-corrections-prerelease-contact-information-inside.)

Thank you for your willingness to share in this most important work.

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Methods Used to Provide Sponsorship to Members Behind the Walls

(Collected from shared experience through a survey sent to area, district, and H&I trusted servants)

AA members in custody have access to literature and incoming AA meetings, but often they don't have access to a sponsor - an essential aspect in achieving and maintaining sobriety. Below are some methods by which AA members on the outside have sponsored those behind the walls. Shared experience indicates that the most common ways to sponsor are by meeting with the person in custody or by corresponding with the person through the mail. In addition, members sponsor via phone calls, video-chats, emails, and text. Below is an overview of how corrections committees provide this valuable service.

1. Inside Visitation Sponsorship (IVS-example program to follow) Corrections service committees have developed sponsorship programs that allow outside sponsors to be placed on their sponsee's visitor list. There are advantages to this method of sponsorship, including:
 - IVS addresses safety and security issues typically associated with overfamiliarity.
 - Since visitors abide by the rules/regulations applicable to visitors, they are not restricted by the rules/regulations for meeting volunteers (those AA members taking meetings into the facility).
 - In many prisons, the visitors' clearance application is shorter than the Alcoholics Anonymous volunteer clearance application process.
 - As visitors, sponsors can speak one-on-one, face-to-face, without being monitored.
 - While we acknowledge that sponsorship between persons in custody does occur, it can be problematic. Individuals are often reluctant to share "a searching and fearless moral inventory" about themselves as it could put them at risk.
2. Outside members sponsor persons in custody through GSO's Corrections Correspondence Service. There are privacy issues as facility staff read all incoming and outgoing mail except for legal mail.
3. Some outside members sponsor via telephone. The amount of time a person in custody can remain on the phone at one time is limited and brief.
4. We are aware of one facility where meeting volunteers have long-standing, trusting relationships with facility staff and they are allowed to take persons in custody to a private location within the facility for a sponsorship meeting. Most prisons do not allow meeting volunteers to meet one-on-one, face-to face with persons in custody in a private location.
5. In some Canadian facilities, Outside members are allowed to take persons in custody out of the facility through a program called "Temporary Escorted Absences." Some Outside members may sponsor persons in custody during that time.

6. Some persons in custody are sponsored by video visitation if they have a tablet service. Video visitation requires scheduling, and there may be a monetary cost, either to the persons in custody or the Outside members. Not all persons in custody have access to tablet services. Outside sponsors may need to be cleared as a visitor when sponsoring by video visitation.
7. In some Areas, correction's professionals have contacted the local corrections committee at the request of the person in custody to arrange for a sponsor. The Outside member then corresponds with the person in custody. If the person in custody is comfortable moving forward in a sponsorship relationship, they may have the Outside member added to their visitors list.
8. Our experience is that short-term stay facilities, like county jails and detention centers, rely on "Bridging the Gap" or "Prerelease Contact" programs to introduce persons in custody to sponsorship. Thus, once released, the person in custody will have access to a sponsorship.

Sample Program of Inside Visitation Sponsorship (IVS) provided by Northern CA Hospitals and Institutions Committee (NorCA H&I)

Inside Visitation Sponsorship provides an outside AA member to visit the person in custody at the correctional facility. This process exempts the outside member from the legal requirements of the Department of Corrections and PREA agreements that are required when a member is a Program Volunteer. The outside AA member completes the necessary documentation that is usually a simple one-page form and submits it for approval. Once the sponsorship matches are confirmed, the inside and outside member may supplementally communicate by letter and tablet or by an anonymous phone system if available and desired by both parties.

Sponsorship services are most easily established in facilities where there is already a Corrections Committee present. The Corrections Coordinator for the facility will have first-hand knowledge of the administration, their key personnel and practices. Sponsorship volunteers should organize separately from regular Corrections Program Volunteers.

STEPS (designed for State Prisons)

1. Obtain support and approval from Area Corrections Committee:
 - a. Review proposed plan and get approval from local District Committees, which will be supplying the volunteers. For some prisons, more than one District may be involved in getting volunteers.
 - b. Identify a corrections committee member willing to be the Institution Sponsorship Coordinator (see position descriptions below); possibly create a sponsorship subcommittee to assist.
2. With the support of the Public Information and Cooperating with the Professional Community Chair, prepare a presentation for the prison administration, including copies of Grapevine articles, Free on the Inside and A.A. In Prison – A Message of Hope. Obtain prison administration approval.
 - a. Approach administration (usually the best initial contact is through the Community Resources Manager or Community Programs Manager).

- b. Get approval from Warden and request permission to customize Visitor Approval Form to protect anonymity.
 - c. Meet with Visiting Office staff.
 - d. Since, in most states, no-one is allowed to bring books to the visiting area, request that AA literature be available in visiting rooms.
3. Set up a PO Box to receive sponsorship requests from inside members.
 4. Design a brochure with an application for inside members with PO Box mailing address.
 5. Create anonymous email account (ex: sanquentin.sponsorship@gmail.com).
 6. Conduct volunteer orientations — explain logistics and guidelines.
 7. Distribute inside member brochure at AA meetings conducted by program volunteers, explaining that the service is for alcoholics looking for AA sponsors, rather than for people in custody looking for company.
 8. Regularly monitor PO Box.
 9. Match and track — keep accurate records of volunteers, applicants, and matches.
 10. Forward letters received from sponsees to sponsors and note on an assignment tracking sheet. For additional shared experience contact: handi.ivss@gmail.com or handi.ivss@gmail.com

INSIDE VISITING SPONSORSHIP SERVICE — POSITION DESCRIPTIONS. As previously stated, this service should be organized entirely separate from the inside AA meeting services the committee provides. The following committee positions are suggested:

SPONSORSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR for the sponsorship service — oversees all service efforts, selects Institution Coordinators.

SPONSORSHIP INSTITUTION COORDINATOR for the service at each institution — recruits volunteers; with Sponsorship Committee Chair establishes relationship with institution administration; organizes and tracks all necessary paperwork; conducts orientations (all volunteers should be oriented prior to assignment with sponsee).

SPONSORSHIP VOLUNTEER — engages in sponsorship with inside member; visits in person at minimum frequency established by committee; communicates via letter to supplement visitation; uses other communication as approved by committee for security (i.e., video visitation, anonymous phone system).

SPONSORSHIP LIAISONS — communicates with other local service committees and assists in recruiting volunteers.

Experience on Sponsoring members through visitation.

My three-year direct experience with sponsoring three men inside San Quentin in the Inside Visitation Sponsorship Service (IVSS) is an enhanced mutual uplift as compared to my experience in civilian AA over thirty-five years.

For my part, the men have shown me the method and the value of praying directly for beneficial outcomes for others, and for myself when it will benefit others. I had always shied away from this. The men have also shown me the value of positive outlook in the face of long odds. I was startled to see their consistent smiles. I see my life differently - rich and full, leaving aside all my tribulations.

For their part, the men were astonished to learn there are other men who gladly come to them and who are disappointed when visitation obstacles arise. They warmly express their thanks to us.

I perceive that the sponsees in this program come to see a broader, deeper view of harm done and their part in it and in the harms done to them. While this would be achieved with strong sponsorship in civilian AA, it is much rarer in the institutional AA and its meetings, as described to me, where direct sponsorship is precluded. The IVSS has in-person, video, phone, and correspondence capability for in-depth work. Of course, face-to-face is the cornerstone of this and is the only fully private method.

Let me close with three examples. Tom N. had not spoken with or seen his father in thirty-nine years of confinement but as a result of articulating his own part in the estrangement, via Step IV, he made direct amends — and his father reciprocated. Tom obtained a miraculous parole through a legal quirk and went to live with his father, where in a few months' time he became the primary caregiver as the father lost his health and passed away within the year. Tom was executor, is now a responsible employee, and is partnered in a loving spiritual relationship with his fiancée. Tom and I are guests in each other's home.

Michael had only six months of confinement left when we began, so that the value of IVSS is in the transition to the outside. In two live sessions and several videos, we passed through the first three steps and had a plan for fellowship and entrance to an AA group in his neighborhood. He presently resides with his mother while he works through a difficult parole (difficult officer), and he has begun Step 9. He has a regular meeting schedule and recovered quickly from a one-night relapse near the time of his release. We work together in my home and in his neighborhood, alternately.

James T. has an open-ended life sentence and has at least five more years to serve. He began AA on the outside sixteen years ago after killing a young person with his vehicle while drunk. We have been interrupted from a normal sequence by the fits and starts of Covid and by James's surgery. He temporarily resides at the California Health Care Facility. The challenge of addressing the shame, guilt, and remorse of negligent homicide, as a sponsor, will be unprecedented for me. Alan is clear about all his part prior to and after the incident, and in his broader life.

Presentations

Through the years, many informative presentations on A.A. in correctional facilities have been given at A.A.'s annual General Service Conference. They are still timely and we reprint three of them here.

A.A. in Institutions *W. J. Estelle, Jr., Class A trustee*

THE EARLY YEARS — The Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, founded in 1935, was into its seventh year with a growing membership of more than 8,000 when a progressive warden at San Quentin asked for nearby members of A.A. to carry the message to alcoholics behind the walls. The year was 1942, and the warden who defied many skeptics was the now-legendary Clinton T. Duffy. He said, "If the program will help just one man, I want to start it."

The first meeting had 20 inmates and several free-world guests in attendance. Warden Duffy recognized the importance of the free-world visitation to the growth of that new A.A. group of imprisoned alcoholics. Others, both inmates and Duffy's peers alike, remained skeptical until the return rate for alcoholic parolees dropped from 80% to 20% and stayed there. What Warden Duffy called "a tool to help us rebuild lives" began to give hope to alcoholics behind bars.

INTO MATURITY — By 1944, the first A.A. group in a federal penitentiary was formed, in Atlanta. By March 1958, there were active groups in 18 federal institutions. In a survey conducted by the federal prison director, James V. Bennet, favorable comments from all wardens praised the accomplishments of the program. Mr. Bennet recognized the value of A.A. in prisons, not only to arrest alcoholism, but also to deal with many living problems that facilitate a criminal life-style.

By 1960 there were 356 prison groups with a total membership of 15,547 members. A.A. in prison had gone international, with seven groups in Finland and two in Holland. Correctional officials nationwide continued to encourage those whose crimes were alcohol-related or admitted alcoholics to join A.A. in prison. Men like Lee Henslee of Arkansas, Gus Harrison of Michigan, and Alfred Dowd of Indiana lauded Alcoholics Anonymous as a "20th-century miracle" that often made the difference in the transition to freedom. More importantly, immediate membership upon release from prison contributed to a more meaningful life with one's family. Success in the community by men who found A.A. while in prison continued to give renewed hope to those who were still inside.

THE TEXAS EXPERIENCE — A.A. in the Texas Prison System had its beginning in 1948, when the first meeting was held at the "Walls" (on the yard near where the present-day chapel stands), with five inmates attending.

Records indicate that the first alcoholic inmate in the Texas Prison System was taken to a state A.A. convention in Tyler in 1951. Free-world interest increased soon after, and

in 1953, Howard Sublett, then with the Classification Committee, became the first departmental sponsor for A.A. From the records Mr. Sublett kept, we know that only 5% of inmates who had six months or more of A.A. while in prison later returned.

By the end of 1960, there were 15 A.A. groups in existence. Today, there are 20 groups in the Texas Department of Corrections [by 1990, there were 47 groups], each with weekly meetings still supported by free-world visitors. Approximately four times a year, selected inmates representing all the “A.A.s in white” are allowed to attend free-world A.A. conventions. Free-world visitation continues to be vital to the success of every alcoholic in white who will not return to T.D.C.

In a 1974 correctional facility survey by the General Service Office revealed the following:

1. The average number of groups per institution is 1.25.
2. Attendance at A.A. meetings is voluntary in 90% of the prisons.
3. 50% of all inmates were sentenced for crimes in which alcohol abuse was a significant factor.
4. 96% of the respondents believed an person in custody's chance of making it on the outside is improved by participating in the A.A. program. It is also believed that only 10% of the inmates estimated to be in prison for alcohol-related crimes throughout America attend A.A. meetings.

On 2022, there are approximately 1,500 registered groups across correctional settings.

THE ENDURING LEGACY — In an article written for a special issue of the Grapevine commemorating the 25th anniversary of A.A., Warden T. Duffy, who by then was a member of the California Parole Board, said the following of Alcoholics Anonymous in prisons.

The A.A. program is presented in a humble and human manner, without high-pressure frills. This is the approach necessary to reach the man who has developed a highly suspicious nature. It helps him to face the truth and reality, without self-pity or dodging of responsibility. It rids him of fears, hates, jealousies, and suspicions that have been his for so long. He learns to eliminate his drinking—to fight the urge, the desire—to get help and fellowship from his A.A. friends.

In prison, not all alcoholics will admit they are powerless over alcohol. But as the years roll on and they see the effect of A.A. on others, the die-hards gradually come around. They see their lives have become unmanageable. They are getting a bit closer to “wanting to want to.”*

* W. J. (Jim) Estelle, Jr., former director, Texas Department of Corrections, was named a nonalcoholic trustee to the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in April 1977 and rotated from the board in 1986. He began his career in corrections in 1952. He then spent two years as warden of Montana State Prison. In 1993 Jim became chairman of the General Service Board; he rotated from that position in 1997.

Beliefs About Corrections-Sharing from Two Members *By Tom I. and Harold L.*

1. The recovery program of A.A. is precisely the same for those on the inside as those on the outside.
2. The people inside the walls are much more like us than unlike us.
3. The challenges met in recovery are at least as great for those on the inside as for anyone.
4. All of A.A.'s 12 Traditions can be practiced 100% on the inside.
5. Some decent, capable people are confined to correctional facilities, and some are not so admirable.
6. Corrections staff are usually willing to offer full cooperation if they understand our primary purpose and function.
7. Sound business procedures contribute significantly to the spirit of our cooperative relationship with corrections staff.
8. We spend far too much time working on arrangements and routine operations.
9. We spend far too little time working on the quality and effectiveness of what we do.
10. A sound and well-implemented program of recovery works well with reliable results.
11. People are most willing to respond to specific requests for service or material help.
12. We can help someone in a correctional facility by merely showing up.
13. Our work is with fellow alcoholics who happen to be confined, not inmates, offenders, prisoners, convicts, etc.
14. Don't do anything for one person you could or would not do for everyone in the group.
15. Being an enthusiastic, good example of recovery is an outstanding contribution.
16. KEEPING COMMITMENTS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. WE MUST WALK LIKE WE TALK.
17. Profane and vulgar language impresses no one.
18. As an established frequency, speaker meetings should be a regular feature of groups in corrections.
19. Always remember that someone new to A.A. is present in most meetings in correctional facilities.
20. Our chief responsibility is to deliver an adequate demonstration of A.A. to the newcomer.
21. No service is more rewarding than a long-term, regular commitment to an A.A. group in a correctional facility, where all parties are accountable to each other. This effort produces a powerful experience to be shared by everyone.
22. Encourage all members to attend A.A., and remember to stress that they take full ownership of why they attend the A.A. group.

23. MAJOR POINT! If they are not working the A.A. program on the inside, make it clear that they will never work the A.A. program on the outside.
24. It is possible for A.A. members and groups on the inside to practice A.A.'s Seventh Tradition and be self-supporting through their own contributions. This spiritual discipline is highly encouraged and takes the efforts of all parties to make it work.
25. Providing A.A. literature for the members is imperative to help keep everyone informed and inspired.
26. Helping secure A.A. Grapevines, both new and old issues, is a great way to carry the A.A. message. Members on the inside are encouraged to submit their own stories to the A.A. Grapevine to be considered for future issues.
27. A.A.s Corrections Correspondences Service is an excellent form of communication for members behind the walls and outside the walls. This service is provided safely and securely through the General Service Office.
28. Helping groups receive the Box 459 newsletter is an excellent way for members on the inside to stay informed about A.A. as a whole.
29. Help members understand that they can expel the compulsion to drink and live a life where they become happy and usefully whole, despite their past deeds and future outcomes.
30. Creating sound and efficient corrections committees at the area, district, and group levels is the most effective way to carry the message into correctional facilities.
31. The first 24-48 hours are the most critical time upon release from a correctional facility. Utilizing programs like Prerelease Contact and Bridging the Gap to help ensure that nobody falls through the cracks is imperative for lasting sobriety for the members being released back into society.
32. Volunteers in Corrections need to respect all lines of administration and communication inside the correctional facility.
33. Developing a strategy to engage the members on the inside with the 12 Steps will help them achieve permanent sobriety. This strategy must be tailored to the current context's needs and its members' average duration in a particular correctional setting.

Press Release

Local corrections committees might want to send a press release to local newspapers or and appropriate websites. Here is a sample press release:

A.A. Works Behind Prison Walls

The first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) ever to take place in a prison setting was at notorious San Quentin, a maximum-risk facility, in 1942. Pioneering Warden Clinton T. Duffy overcame the objections of penologists who wrote A.A. off as “just a useless fad,” declaring that hardboiled methods were the only way to rehabilitate alcoholics behind the walls.

At the first meeting, and others that followed, there was only one guard stationed outside the meeting room, and he was on hand mainly to care for the needs of A.A. visitors from the outside. Skeptics still scoffed... until parole figures on the alcoholics attending A.A. meetings suddenly dropped from the usual 80 percent returning to prison down to an incredible 20 percent—and held that way.

The first and oldest meeting in Canada was held at the Dorchester and registered with GSO on June 22, 1949.

More than 1,800 programs have since been established behind prison walls, from Maine to Texas, where the first A.A. meeting took place when five alcoholic men met together in the Huntsville Prison Unit in 1948. Five years later, the A.A. program became an official part of the rehabilitation services of the Texas Department of Corrections.

Some people, however, have continued to misunderstand the goals of A.A. in prisons. It is not a religious or temperance movement, social-service organization, employment agency, or cure-all. Nor is it interested in soliciting money or favors. A.A. in fact accepts no contributions from anyone outside its membership. It is simply a way to help men and women stay sober, both in and out of prison, and to help them redirect their lives in positive ways.

A.A. corrections programs extend beyond the prison walls. When released, formerly incarcerated people find help from other members, who introduce them to members of local groups and steer them through the first crucial days of transition into the “real world.” In A.A., no stigma is attached to members who have been jailed; they are accepted as fellow alcoholics recovering in A.A. like anyone else, whether business person, homemaker, doctor, lawyer, nurse, student, or full-time grandma.

In most metropolitan centers, local A.A. service committees work closely with the prison (and hospital) groups. Members schedule outside speakers at meetings, share their experiences on a one-to-one basis, and follow through with practical and emotional support whenever a person is released and trying to adjust to life on the outside.

As they regain their confidence, jobs, families, and friends, many of these newly rehabilitated people turn around and offer a helping hand to those coming after them. Thus, with the continuing support of prison officials and the many dedicated outside groups and individuals who understand that alcoholism is an insidious but arrestable illness, alcoholics behind bars are getting well in A.A. and learning how to make “today the first day” of the rest of their lives.

Non-A.A. Resources

Tradition Six states that Alcoholics Anonymous “ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise...” In the spirit of cooperating with outside agencies, we are including the following list of Non-A.A. Resources:

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD), US Resources. 28 East Osterd Street, Suite 303, Baltimore, MD, <http://www.ncadd.us>, Email address: admin1@ncadd.us. Hope Line: 800/NCA-CALL (24-hour affiliate referral)

World Service Office of Narcotics Anonymous, P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409, Telephone (818) 773-9999 (x771), Fax (818) 700-0700, <http://www.na.org>, Email: fsmail@na.org

Al-Anon Family Groups US, 1600 Corporate Landing Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617, Telephone (757) 563-1600, Fax 757-563-1656 or Email: ws@al-anon.org, Canada 275 Slater Street, Suite 1800 Ottawa ON K1P 5H9 Telephone (613) 723-8484 Email: wso@al-anon.ca

Gamblers Anonymous, International Service Office, 1306 Monte Vista Avenue Suite 5 Upland, CA 91786, Telephone (909) 931-9056, Fax (909) 931-9059, <http://www.gamblersanonymous.org>; Email: isomain@gamblersanonymous.org

Sex Addicts Anonymous (S.A.A.), ISO of SAA, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270, Telephone US/Canada (713) 869-4902, Email: info@saa-recovery.org; <http://www.saa-recovery.org>

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), Parklawn Building, Room 16-105, 5635 Fishers Lane, MSC 9304, Bethesda, MD 20892-9304, Telephone (301) 443-3860 (gen. info), Email: ASKNIAAA@nih.gov, <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>

American Correctional Association, 206 North Washington Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22314, (703) 224-0000, <http://www.aca.org>

The American Correctional Association (ACA) publishes several useful directories. To contact ACA Phone: (703) 224-0000; Fax: (703) 224-0179; <https://www.aca.org/>

Correctional Services Canada (CSC): 340 Laurier Avenue W Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9 (Federal Headquarters) Ph. (613) 992-5891. WebsiteHYPERLINK “<http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/>”: www.csc-scc.gc.ca

Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Society: 190 Bronson Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario (Works with women, girls or gender diverse people in the justice system.) Telephone (800) 637-4606; Email: HYPERLINK “<mailto:admin@caef.ca>”admin@caef.ca.

Parole Board of Canada: National 410 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa Ontario K1A 0R1. Ph. (613) 954-7474. WebsiteHYPERLINK “<mailto:www.info@pbc-clcc.gc.ca>”: www.info@pbc-clcc.gc.ca

Regional: use HYPERLINK “<http://www.info@pbc-clcc.gc.ca>” www.info@pbc-clcc.gc.ca look under Regional Offices

Corrections articles available for free

Below please find links to two articles written by Nancy McCarthy (past Class A trustee) for the corrections professional community.

Perspectives is published by the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), an association for corrections professionals involved in pre-trial, diversion, probation and parole.

https://www.appa-net.org/eWeb/docs/APPA/pubs/Perspectives/Perspectives_V45_N3/#page=16

Corrections Today is published by the American Correctional Association (ACA), the professional organization for those working in jails and prisons. ACA also provides the jail and prison accreditation that most facilities seek.

<https://user-3imepyw.cld.bz/corrections-today-january-february-2022-vol-84-no-1>

Both magazines are available free online to members and the general public. We have also been told by ACA and APPA that we are free to distribute the articles as we wish. There are no propriety issues, no paywall, no cost, no copyright issues. It is asked we note the title of the magazine. As members work with the local corrections entities, including in both confined and community corrections settings, copies of the article could be shared to help educate professionals.

The following suggests ways to use various pamphlets.

FOR A.A. CORRECTIONS COMMITTEE WORKERS

A.A. in Correctional Facilities (P-26)
Carrying the Message into Correctional Facilities (F-5)
How A.A. Members Cooperate with Professionals (P-29)
Carrying the Message Behind These Walls (DVD) (DV-06)
A New Freedom DVD (DV-18)

FOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF

A.A. in Correctional Facilities (P-26)
A.A. in Your Community (P-31)
A Message to Corrections Professionals (P-20)
Problems Other Than Alcohol (P-35, F-8)
Information on Alcoholics Anonymous (F-2)
Understanding Anonymity (P-47)
A.A. in Correctional Facilities (DVD) (DV-02)
AA Video for Legal and Corrections Professionals
<https://www.aa.org/A.A.-Video-for-Legal-and-Corrections-Professionals>
Young People's Animation Video
<https://www.aa.org/young-people%27s-animation-video>

ABOUT A.A.

A Newcomer Asks (P-24)
Where Do I Go From Here? (F-4)
Understanding Anonymity (P-47)
Questions & Answers on Sponsorship (P-15)
Problems Other Than Alcohol (P-35, F-8)
Wallet Card (M-2)
How It Works (P-10)

FOR INDIVIDUALS IN CUSTODY

A.A. in Prison: A Message of Hope (B-13)
It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell (P-33)
Behind the Walls: A Message of Hope (P-9)
A.A. In Prison: A Message of Hope (B-13)
Sharing from Behind the Walls (F-97) (Newsletter)
A New Freedom (DVD) (DV-18)

FOR YOUTH

A Message to Teenagers (F-9)
Too Young? (P-37)
Young People and A.A. (P-4)

Grapevine books

In Our Own Words (GV-19)
Young & Sober (GV-27)
Free On The Inside (GV-43)

Young People in A.A. DVD (DV-10)
Young People/Animation Video DVD (DV-16)

EASY TO READ

Is A.A. for Me? (P-36)
Is A.A. for You? (P-3)
It Happened to Alice (P-39)
What Happened to Joe (P-38)
Twelve Steps Illustrated (P-55)
Twelve Traditions Illustrated (P-43)

HISTORIES BY MEMBERS

Women in A.A. (P-5)
LGBTQ Alcoholics in A.A. (P-32)
A.A. for the Native North American (P-21)
A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic (P-51)
A.A. for the Alcoholic with Mental Health Issues — and Their Sponsors (P-87)
Hispanic Women in A.A. (SP-5)
The “God” Word: Agnostic and Atheist Members in A.A. (P-83)
Do You Think You’re Different? (P-13)
A.A. Member—Medications and Other Drugs (P-11)
A.A. For the Older Alcoholic (P-22)

Grapevine Magazines:

AA Grapevine — monthly
La Viña — bimonthly

Grapevine CDs

Classic Grapevines, Vols. 2 & 3 (CD-02, 03)
Pathways to Spirituality MP3 (DL-01)
Not for Newcomers Only, Vols. 1 & 2 (CD-05)
Partners on the Journey MP3 (DL06)

OTHER USEFUL AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL

CDs:

Alcoholics Anonymous (The Big Book) (M-81)
Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (M-83)
Living Sober (M-85)
Voices of Our Co-Founders (M-88)
Pioneers in A.A. (M-90)
A Brief Guide to A.A. (M-91)

GSO Films/DVDs:

Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous (DV-09)
Your A.A. General Service Office, the Grapevine,
and the General Service Structure (DV-07)

Grapevine CDs:

The Best of Bill (CD-13)

For other Grapevine items see www.aagrapevine.org

