

about A.A.

a newsletter for professionals and semi-professionals



From: The Committee on
Professional Relations of
The General Service Board
of Alcoholics Anonymous
P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station
New York, N.Y. 10017

Summer, 1972

About the Committee on Professional Relations . . .

In 1970, the Committee on Professional Relations was appointed as a standing committee of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. Its purpose is to further A.A.'s primary purpose of carrying the message to the alcoholic through sharing information about the A.A. program with those professional agencies, groups and individuals who have contact with alcoholics, and to further mutual understanding and cooperation between the Fellowship of A.A. and others concerned about the problem of alcoholism and help for the alcoholic. The committee has continued to search for creative and productive ways of cooperating with others to the mutual benefit of A.A., the professionals, and most of all, to the sick alcoholic. One of the committee's objectives is to acquaint the Fellowship with what you are doing and to encourage open-minded cooperation, within the A.A. Traditions, with your plans and programs.

About the Newsletter . . .

This newsletter, a project of the Committee on Professional Relations, will not be distributed on a regularly scheduled basis, but whenever we have information of sufficient interest to those outside the Fellowship to make it worthwhile. In it, we hope to share with you some of the things that we have done to improve our knowledge and understanding of what you are doing, and to give this information to A.A. members everywhere.

About Some New Material . . .

As A.A. is available almost everywhere, almost all the time, at no cost to anyone, it may be the first referral source that occurs to many people. Even though many people know about A.A., they do not always understand A.A.'s traditional way of functioning, and so we have prepared a new pamphlet, several new "Guidelines" and "Memos" which we hope will help

to clarify misunderstandings and misconceptions. Our new pamphlet is enclosed, as well as one new Guideline and a Memo. On the last page of this newsletter, you will find listed other Guidelines and pamphlets which might be of specific interest to you.

About Being Friendly With Our Friends . . .

During the past year, you have given us a number of opportunities to put into practice the advice of our co-founder, Bill W., that we be "friendly with our friends." The trustees of the A.A. General Service Board and staff members from the A.A. General Service Office have been able to accept invitations for participation in more than a dozen meetings of professional groups concerned with the problem of alcoholism. We have had the opportunity to meet many of you at these meetings, and we look forward to continuing this practice and to having visits from you at our office in New York whenever you may be in this vicinity.

About A.A.'s New Exhibit . . .

Some of you may have seen our Exhibit at one of the fourteen national professional meetings at which it has been shown during the past year. We have recently had a new Exhibit constructed, and it has been extremely well received at the four meetings where it has been shown—as a matter of fact, it won a red ribbon award at the Industrial Health Conference.

About U.S. Army Workshops on A.A. in Germany, England . . .

In February, Dr. John L. Norris, nonalcoholic chairman of A.A.'s Board of Trustees, held workshops on alcoholism and Alcoholics Anonymous at U.S. military installations in five major West German cities, at the invitation of the U.S. Seventh Army.

They were so well received that Dr. Norris was asked to conduct similar workshops in England, which he did. He established liaison between the U.S. Armed Forces there and the A.A. Central Office in London.

Upon his return from Europe, Dr. Norris conferred extensively with armed forces officials in the Pentagon. An interview with him was taped for broadcast to approximately 495 armed forces stations around the world.

A.A.'s General Service Office (G.S.O.) in New York receives an ever-mounting number of inquiries from armed forces personnel. We are able to send them special material about A.A. in the armed services, and arrange for contacts between the army's and navy's alcoholism programs and nearby A.A. members.

About Vatican Discussion of A.A. . . .

During his European visit, Dr. Norris also kept appointments in the Vatican with Cardinal Wright, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Clergy, and Father Arrupe, Jesuit Father General.

About Surveys/Research Projects and A.A. . . .

From time to time, A.A. groups are asked to participate in non-A.A. surveys or research projects. Occasionally, misunderstandings have come about. As a result, we now have a Memo for the use of A.A. members on this subject. Copies of this memo are available.

Any individual A.A. member is, of course, free to participate in such projects. However, traditionally, A.A. groups have not taken A.A. meeting time for any other purpose than to discuss the recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our assurance to A.A. members, particularly newcomers, is that A.A. is concerned with one thing only—the recovery and continued sobriety of those individuals who come to the Fellowship for help with their drinking problems. Should we distribute questionnaires, announcements, etc. on other subjects, the credibility of our primary purpose might be jeopardized. If we participated with one individual, group, or agency on a project, we would have to do the same for everyone . . . and thus be diverted from our primary purpose.

A.A. is not opposed to research, and we feel that most A.A. members are grateful for the interest and dedicated efforts of those outside our Fellowship. However, our first concern is to make sure that the

A.A. program is not diluted by attempts to extend our activity beyond our stated purpose.

About Nonalcoholic Addicts and A.A. . . .

We would like to call your attention to a familiar and recurring problem which is accelerating in many areas and is becoming a cause for concern to many A.A. members. We refer to the matter of A.A. membership for nonalcoholic addicts. They are, of course, welcome at open A.A. meetings, but A.A. membership is confined to alcoholics, and A.A. groups are confined to a single purpose. A.A. has no wish to be exclusive, but does hope to continue to be effective with alcoholics who seek our help.

Dr. Vincent Dole, a pioneer in methadone treatment for heroin addicts, said at the 1970 General Service Conference (and again at the meeting of the General Service Board, April 22, 1972):

“The source of strength in A.A. is its single-mindedness . . . The mission of A.A. is to help alcoholics. A.A. limits what it is demanding of itself and its associates, and its success lies in its limited target. To believe that the process that is successful in one line guarantees success for another would be a very serious mistake.”

We welcome opportunities to share A.A. experience with those who would like to develop self-help programs for nonalcoholic addicts—using A.A. methods, perhaps, but using the *experience* of the nonalcoholic drug addict during drug addiction *and* recovery.

About A.A.'s World Directory . . .

The matter of distribution of A.A.'s World Directory to outside organizations and individuals is, perhaps, not always understood by those outside the Fellowship. This publication is confidential, using full names, addresses, and telephone numbers of A.A. members. They are meant to be available to A.A. members only and are for sharing A.A. information and activity. We receive a substantial number of orders for our World Directory from those outside the Fellowship, and these orders *cannot be filled*, except on the written consent of the General Service delegate in the area from which the request comes. This safeguard represents action, on innumerable occasions, of the 90 delegates to the General Service Conference (A.A.'s deliberative and policy-making body). The 1972 General Service Conference reaffirmed this policy.

Even when the delegate agrees to issue the Directory, it is important to remember that the Directory should be used for referring alcoholics to A.A. groups in their home towns, and not as a mailing list, or for any other purpose. However, in the absence of an A.A. central office in a community, we can always make arrangements for our General Service delegates to help you in providing referrals for your alcoholic patients or clients.

The same procedures described above, regarding distribution of the World Directory, apply to requests from A.A. members who are employed in the alcoholism field and order the Directory on behalf of the agency or facility in which they are employed.

About What Makes A.A. Members Uneasy . . .

The material which we are enclosing, as well as this newsletter, will make apparent to you, we hope, our good faith in trying to open channels of communication and improve our means of cooperation with others concerned with the problem of alcoholism. The A.A. Traditions have evolved from the experience of A.A. groups during the past 36 years. The unity which the Fellowship enjoys is insured by these Traditions. Because the individual recovery of each of us in A.A. depends upon the unity of our Fellowship, A.A. members are very protective of the Traditions and very uneasy in the face of any activity which seems to threaten or jeopardize them in any way. Understandably, A.A. members are very much more likely to extend A.A. cooperation when they feel reasonably assured that the agency, facility, or professional individual seeking A.A. cooperation understands and respects these Traditions. Overwhelmingly, in our experience, you have demonstrated that this is the case, and we are indeed grateful for your understanding.

About Our Mailing List . . .

In preparing the mailing list for this newsletter, we found that many names were carried on more than one list. We have tried to eliminate duplicate mailings, but if we have failed in your case, and you have received two copies, please pass on your extra copy to someone you think would be interested in receiving it. Also, if you are interested in receiving future mailings from us, would you be kind enough to fill in the enclosed, self-addressed card and return it to us?

A.A. Publications You Might Like To See . . .

The following Guidelines—*prepared for the use of A.A. members*—might be of interest to you:

Guidelines for A.A. Cooperation With Alcoholism Agencies and Facilities

Guidelines for Carrying the Message to Hard-to-Reach Alcoholics

Guidelines for A.A. Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field (those who wear "two hats")

Guidelines on Industry Programs

Guidelines on Court Programs

Guidelines on Rehabilitation Facilities

Guidelines for A.A. Cooperation During Alcoholism Information Month

Guidelines for Armed Forces A.A. Groups

Memo on Cooperation With Non-A.A. Surveys and Research Projects

And the following pamphlets might be of interest:

A.A. in Your Community

A Brief Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous

A.A. and the Medical Profession

A Clergyman Asks About A.A.

A.A. in Prisons

A.A. in Hospitals

A.A. Tradition—How it Developed

The A.A. Traditions—Illustrated

A.A. and the Alcoholic Employee

Alcoholism is a Management Problem . . . A.A. Suggests One Solution

Why Alcoholics Anonymous is Anonymous

The A.A. Survey

If You Are a Professional . . .

Problems Other Than Alcohol

Let's be Friendly With Our Friends