

A.A. in Your Community:

**A GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONALS
WHO WORK WITH ALCOHOLICS**



Alcoholics
Anonymous
World Services, Inc.

www.aa.org

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 others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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INTRODUCTION

Alcoholics Anonymous is grateful to the many professionals who have supported the A.A. program of recovery. Thousands of us owe our lives to them, and our debt of gratitude knows no bounds. This pamphlet is intended for professionals as a general introduction to the Alcoholics Anonymous program: it describes what Alcoholics Anonymous is; where to find A.A. in your community; and how A.A. works with professionals to help people who have a drinking problem.

Social scientists have long understood that community — generally defined as a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social or familial ties and share common perspectives — is one of the most important emotional underpinnings of our lives as human beings.

Alcoholism is a disrupter of communities — isolating alcoholics, separating them from friends and family, causing them to lose sight of ambitions and dreams, sometimes driving them to prison, mental illness and even death.

One of the greatest gifts that Alcoholics Anonymous confers on its members is to return them, sober, to their communities. A.A. members are parents, spouses, children, relatives, friends and co-workers who had once been lost in addiction and have now come home again.

A.A. and doctors, healthcare professionals, faith leaders, law enforcement and court officials, educators, counselors and social workers, and other professionals who work with alcoholics share a common goal: to reintegrate sober alcoholics back into our communities.

WHAT IS A.A.? HOW DOES IT WORK?

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people from all walks of life who help each other to stay sober. (At last count, A.A. had roughly two million members worldwide.) The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. Members share their “experience, strength and hope” with recovery from alcoholism at meetings and on a one-to-one basis. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership.

A.A. is a program of abstinence from alcohol. At the core of the program are the Twelve Steps of Recovery (see page 17), a group of principles based on the experience of A.A.’s early members. Practiced as a way of life, the Twelve Steps include elements found in the spiritual teachings of many faiths. These Steps have helped A.A. members the world over to live sober, fulfilling lives.

Recent research studies on the effectiveness of Alcoholics Anonymous (which does not engage in or sponsor research about itself, except for its own internal demographic survey) have concluded that the shift that A.A. brings about in the alcoholic’s social network — that is, away from those who drink heavily and toward those who are sober — is enormously helpful in supporting long-term sobriety.

In addition, A.A. is a community of people who seek to recover from alcoholism in part by helping others to recover. This helps alcoholics heal by allowing them to look outward from inward suffering. While altruism is helpful for many people, not just for alcoholics, it is a core principle of Alcoholics Anonymous, and one that alcoholics who remain sober bring to their interactions with loved ones, friends, colleagues and their communities at large.

The A.A. Group

The A.A. group is the heart of the A.A. community. A.A. groups are autonomous, guided only by a series of traditions garnered from long experience (see page 18). A.A.'s essential work is done by alcoholics who are themselves recovering in the Fellowship. Typically, two or more alcoholics meeting together for purposes of sobriety may consider themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no outside affiliations and are self-supporting. Local groups generally select committees on a rotating basis to oversee vital group activities and services, which include holding A.A. meetings at established times and places.

Where Does A.A. Meet?

A.A. groups meet in a variety of locations, including community centers, schools and places of worship. Because A.A. meetings are often held in places of worship, people may mistakenly believe that Alcoholics Anonymous has religious ties, but A.A. has *no affiliation with any religious organization*. When A.A. was just getting started in the 1930s, many churches were generous enough to allow meetings to be held in their basements or common spaces, a large-hearted practice that continues to this day. Of course, A.A. members pay rent like any tenant, doing so thanks to contributions that members put in the basket they pass at meetings.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY FOR PROFESSIONALS TO FIND A.A. MEETINGS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY?

In most communities, finding A.A. meetings is just a keyboard click or phone call away. Typing "Alcoholics Anonymous" into a search engine will usually bring you to the website

of an A.A. central office near you, where local meeting listings can be found.

Even easier to use is the popular Meeting Guide app. Free and downloadable from the App Store or Google Play, the Meeting Guide app allows users to access updated information about meeting locations and times. It gives directions to physical meetings close to people's homes or places of employment; provides links to virtual meetings; and clearly enumerates the name, address and time of each meeting, as well as what type of A.A. meeting it is. Currently, there are nearly 125,000 meetings on the app, with 251,000 monthly active users.

Professionals can find many A.A. resources online in many formats (read, listen, watch). Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (A.A.W.S.) has a profile on LinkedIn as well as a YouTube page. A.A.W.S. also supports the free Meeting Guide app and the website of the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, www.aa.org, which offers information about A.A. for professionals who work with alcoholics, as well as for people seeking help with a drinking problem. The international journals AA Grapevine and La Viña (A.A.'s "meetings in print") have Instagram profiles and a YouTube page.

A Meeting for Everyone

A.A. strives to be an inclusive community, and this diversity is reflected in the wide variety of meetings available: there are meetings for newcomers and for young people; meetings conducted in Spanish, French and many other languages; gay, lesbian, nonbinary and transgender meetings; meetings for alcoholics with mental health issues; meetings in American Sign Language (ASL); meetings for

people of color; meetings for agnostics and atheists; and many more. Attending a variety of meetings can help individuals find the best “fit” to suit their particular needs.

A.A. meeting listings are generally accompanied by the notation “open” or “closed.” An open meeting means that nonalcoholics — such as family members or helping professionals — can attend, as observers, while a closed meeting is only for those with a desire to stop drinking.

If an alcoholic is unable to attend physical meetings, a wide variety of online meetings is available. Many meetings are held on virtual platforms. In addition, there are email meetings where an email is sent out on a specific topic; chat (text) meetings that include a live chat following the same format as a face-to-face meeting; discussion forums or message boards where a topic is posted and group members post in return (these are active 24/7); and the telephone, where meetings are conducted via a conference-call format.

HOW DOES A.A. WORK WITH PROFESSIONALS?

A.A. has a long history of cooperating but not affiliating with other organizations and can provide A.A. meetings and informational presentations to professionals upon request. (Visit aa.org/contact-cpc to contact the Cooperation with the Professional Community desk, which focuses on communication with professionals who work with alcoholics.)

Individual situations vary, but here are a few examples of how A.A. cooperates with professionals:

A.A. members are experienced in setting up A.A. groups within correctional settings.

Roughly 1,500 A.A. groups meet in correctional settings in the U.S. and Canada. In addition, A.A.'s "Bridging the Gap" program, in which A.A. members volunteer as temporary contacts, helps acquaint those recently released from custody with A.A. meetings in their home areas. This program is meant to build stability in the lives of such individuals, helping them stay sober for the long term.

A.A. provides information that can help healthcare professionals, as well as students on clinical rotations, overcome some of their patients' common misconceptions about A.A. — such as A.A. being a religious organization or that A.A. members turn away or judge people who are on medication. If possible, it is helpful for healthcare professionals to observe a few open A.A. meetings so they can give information to patients as to how an A.A. meeting works and in some cases get a list of contacts willing to take patients to their first meeting. The Bridging the Gap program described above also serves individuals leaving treatment centers, hospitals and institutions.

For faith leaders who counsel alcoholics, it can be helpful to know active A.A. members in the community to whom they can refer anyone looking for help with a drinking problem. They, too, can attend open A.A. meetings and also become acquainted with A.A. literature such as *Alcoholics Anonymous*, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, the booklet *Living Sober*, and AA Grapevine and La Viña, magazines that feature inspirational stories by and for alcoholics.

For more information on how A.A. cooperates with professionals who work with alcoholics, visit aa.org and click the "For Professionals" tab.

QUESTIONS PROFESSIONALS ARE COMMONLY ASKED ABOUT ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:

- **Is A.A. religious?**

A.A. has no affiliation with any religion nor does it inquire into alcoholics' religious beliefs — or lack thereof — when they turn to A.A. members for help. The A.A. program of recovery is based on certain spiritual values, and individual members are free to interpret these values as they think best, or not to think about them at all.

- **Is A.A. anti-alcohol?**

While A.A.s know that they cannot consume alcohol safely, they appreciate that alcohol may be fine for most people. The average A.A. member has no desire to deprive anyone of something that, properly handled, is a source of enjoyment for others.

- **Are there any rules in A.A.?**

The absence of rules, regulations or “musts” — both at the local group and the worldwide level — is one of the unique features of A.A. There are no bylaws that say members have to attend a certain number of meetings in a given time, for example. A.A.'s primary principles clearly state that *the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.*

- **Will people find out that I joined A.A.?**

Anonymity is and always has been a basic tenet of the A.A. program. Many members, after they have been in A.A. a while, have no particular objection if the word gets around that they have joined a fellowship that enables them to stay sober. But no one has the right to break the anonymity of another member. This means that new-

comers can turn to A.A. with the assurance that no newfound friends will violate confidences related to their drinking problem.

- **Is there a fee for A.A. membership?**

Membership in A.A. involves no financial obligation of any kind. The A.A. program of recovery from alcoholism is available to anyone who has a desire to stop drinking and is supported by the voluntary contributions of its members.

- **Is A.A. opposed to alcoholics taking prescribed medication?**

A.A. does not offer medical advice. Medication, like any other medical treatment, is a matter for members to discuss with their physician or practitioner.

- **Is there evidence-based proof of A.A.'s efficacy?**

A rigorous independent study published by the medical journal *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* in 2020 examined 25 previous studies involving 10,565 participants around the world. The meta-analysis found that Alcoholics Anonymous works as well as other scientifically proven treatments for alcoholism, including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), outpatient treatment by a doctor, and alcohol education programs. In fact, A.A. outperformed these methods when it came to longevity of sobriety.

- **Why doesn't A.A. work for everyone?**

A.A. will work only for those who admit that they are alcoholics, who honestly want to stop drinking — and who are able to keep those facts uppermost in their minds at all times. A.A. usually will not work for people who have reservations about whether they are alcoholics, or who cling to the hope of being able to drink normally again.

WORKING WITH PROFESSIONALS WITHIN COMMUNITIES

As the world's first Twelve Step recovery program, Alcoholics Anonymous, founded in 1935, has long made it a priority to work with professionals within communities. Early members of A.A. entered hospitals where alcoholics were “drying out” in efforts to help the suffering patients find sobriety. A.A. groups began bringing meetings into jails as early as 1940. Today A.A. groups work to take speakers into treatment centers; to share information with professionals such as doctors, lawyers, judges and probation officers; and to speak at schools, colleges and hospitals.

Many A.A. members are first introduced to the A.A. program in treatment settings or through the legal system; many more receive counseling (psychological or spiritual) for their alcoholism before and after entering the program. Thus, professionals in the fields of health care, addiction medicine, psychology and the law — and any others whose working lives intersect daily with alcoholics — are invaluable in helping sober alcoholics return to their community of parents, spouses, children, relatives, friends and co-workers.

As a program that points the way for alcoholics to find a new way of life without alcohol, one that is working successfully for hundreds of thousands of people, A.A. stands ready to cooperate with professionals at all times to help suffering alcoholics achieve and maintain sobriety.

USEFUL LINKS FROM ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS WORLD SERVICES, INC.

REQUESTS AND QUESTIONS FOR PROFESSIONALS

www.aa.org/contact-cpc

FREE SUBSCRIPTION TO NEWSLETTER FOR PROFESSIONALS

www.aa.org/about-aa

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR PROFESSIONALS

www.aa.org/aa-professionals

OFFICIAL LINKEDIN PAGE

www.linkedin.com/company/aaworldservicesinc

OFFICIAL YOUTUBE PAGE

[www.youtube.com/c/](http://www.youtube.com/c/AlcoholicsAnonymousWorldServicesInc)

AlcoholicsAnonymousWorldServicesInc

OFFICIAL MEETING FINDER APP

www.aa.org/meeting-guide-app

GETTING STARTED IN A.A.

www.aa.org/new-to-aa

FIND A.A. OFFICES BY STATE OR PROVINCE

www.aa.org/pages/en_US/find-local-aa

OFFICIAL WEBSITE

www.aa.org

USEFUL LINKS FROM AA GRAPEVINE, INC.

AA GRAPEVINE

www.aagrapevine.org

LA VIÑA

www.aalavina.org

PODCAST

www.aagrapevine.org/podcast

OFFICIAL YOUTUBE

www.youtube.com/aagrapevine

OFFICIAL INSTAGRAM

@alcoholicsanonymous_gv

and

@alcoholicosanonimos_lv

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ONLINE A.A. MEETINGS

DIRECTORY OF ONLINE A.A. MEETINGS

www.aa-intergroup.org/

THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6. 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.

7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

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

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

A.A. PUBLICATIONS Below is a partial listing of A.A. publications. Complete order forms are available from the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. Telephone: (212) 870-3400. Website: www.aa.org

BOOKS

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS
DAILY REFLECTIONS
AS BILL SEES IT
OUR GREAT RESPONSIBILITY
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS COMES OF AGE
DR. BOB AND THE GOOD OLDTIMERS
'PASS IT ON'

BOOKLETS

LIVING SOBER
CAME TO BELIEVE
A.A. IN PRISON: A MESSAGE OF HOPE
A.A. FOR THE OLDER ALCOHOLIC — NEVER TOO LATE

PAMPHLETS

Experience, Strength and Hope:

WOMEN IN A.A.
A.A. FOR THE BLACK AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN ALCOHOLIC
A.A. FOR THE NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN
YOUNG PEOPLE IN A.A.
LGBTQ ALCOHOLICS IN A.A.
THE "GOD" WORD: AGNOSTIC AND ATHEIST MEMBERS IN A.A.
A.A. FOR ALCOHOLICS WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES —
AND THEIR SPONSORS
ACCESS TO A.A.: MEMBERS SHARE ON OVERCOMING BARRIERS
A.A. AND THE ARMED SERVICES
DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DIFFERENT?
MANY PATHS TO SPIRITUALITY
HISPANIC WOMEN IN A.A.
BEHIND THE WALLS: A MESSAGE OF HOPE
IT SURE BEATS SITTING IN A CELL
(An illustrated pamphlet for those in custody)

About A.A.:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT A.A.
IS A.A. FOR ME?
IS A.A. FOR YOU?
A NEWCOMER ASKS
IS THERE AN ALCOHOLIC IN YOUR LIFE?
THIS IS A.A.
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SPONSORSHIP
THE A.A. GROUP
PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL
THE A.A. MEMBER—MEDICATIONS AND OTHER DRUGS
SELF-SUPPORT: WHERE MONEY AND SPIRITUALITY MIX
EXPERIENCE HAS TAUGHT US:
AN INTRODUCTION TO OUR TWELVE TRADITIONS
THE TWELVE STEPS ILLUSTRATED
THE TWELVE CONCEPTS ILLUSTRATED
THE TWELVE TRADITIONS ILLUSTRATED
HOW A.A. MEMBERS COOPERATE WITH PROFESSIONALS
A.A. IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES
A.A. IN TREATMENT SETTINGS
BRIDGING THE GAP
A.A. TRADITION—HOW IT DEVELOPED
LET'S BE FRIENDLY WITH OUR FRIENDS
UNDERSTANDING ANONYMITY

For Professionals:

A.A. IN YOUR COMMUNITY
A BRIEF GUIDE TO A.A.
IF YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AS A RESOURCE
FOR THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL
A MESSAGE TO CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS
IS THERE A PROBLEM DRINKER IN THE WORKPLACE?
FAITH LEADERS ASK ABOUT A.A.
A.A. MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

VIDEOS (available on www.aa.org)

A.A. VIDEOS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
HOPE: ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
A NEW FREEDOM
CARRYING THE MESSAGE BEHIND THESE WALLS

For Professionals:

A.A. VIDEO FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS
A.A. VIDEO FOR LEGAL AND CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS
A.A. VIDEO FOR EMPLOYMENT/HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS

PERIODICALS

AA GRAPEVINE (monthly, www.aagrapevine.org)
LA VIÑA (bimonthly, in Spanish, www.aalavina.org)

A DECLARATION OF UNITY

This we owe to A.A.'s future: to place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come.

I AM RESPONSIBLE...

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

**This is A.A. General Service
Conference-approved literature.**

