

Information on Alcoholics Anonymous

FOR ANYONE NEW COMING TO A.A.,
FOR ANYONE REFERRING PEOPLE TO A.A.

This information is both for people who may have a drinking problem and for those in contact with people who have, or are suspected of having, a problem. Most of the information is available in more detail in literature published by A.A. World Services, Inc. A list of recommended pamphlets and Guidelines is given on the other side of this sheet. This tells what to expect from Alcoholics Anonymous. It describes what A.A. is, what A.A. does, and what A.A. does *not* do.

WHAT IS A.A.?

Alcoholics Anonymous is an international fellowship of men and women who have had a drinking problem. It is nonprofessional, self-supporting, nondenominational, multiracial, apolitical, and available almost everywhere. There are no age or education requirements. Membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about his or her drinking problem.

WHAT DOES A.A. DO?

1. A.A. members share their experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem; they give person-to-person service or "sponsorship" to the alcoholic coming to A.A. from any source.
2. The A.A. program, set forth in our Twelve Steps, offers the alcoholic a way to develop a satisfying life without alcohol.
3. This program is discussed at A.A. group meetings.
 - a. Open speaker meetings—open to alcoholics and nonalcoholics. (Attendance at an open A.A. meeting is the best way to learn what A.A. is, what it does, and what it does not do.) At speaker meetings, A.A. members "tell their stories." They describe their experiences with alcohol, how they came to A.A., and how their lives have changed as a result of A.A.
 - b. Open discussion meetings—one member speaks briefly about his or her drinking experience, and then leads a discussion on A.A. recovery or any drinking-related problem anyone brings up.
(*Closed meetings are for A.A.s or anyone who may have a drinking problem.*)
 - c. Closed discussion meetings—conducted just as open discussions are, but for alcoholics or prospective A.A.s only.
 - d. Step meetings (usually closed)—discussion of one of the Twelve Steps.
 - e. A.A. members also take meetings into correctional and treatment facilities.
 - f. A.A. members may be asked to conduct the informational meetings about A.A. as a part of A.S.A.P. (Alcohol Safety Action Project) and D.W.I. (Driving While Intoxicated) programs. These meetings *about* A.A. are *not* regular A.A. group meetings.

MEMBERS FROM COURT PROGRAMS AND TREATMENT FACILITIES

In the last years, A.A. groups have welcomed many new members from court programs and treatment facilities. Some have come to A.A. voluntarily; others, under a degree of pressure. In our pamphlet "How A.A. Members Cooperate," the following appears:

We cannot discriminate against any prospective A.A. member, even if he or she comes to us under pressure from a court, an employer, or any other agency.

Although the strength of our program lies in the voluntary nature of membership in A.A., many of us first attended meetings because we were forced to, either by someone else or by inner discomfort. But continual exposure to A.A. educated us to the true nature of the illness. . . . Who made the referral to A.A. is *not* what A.A. is interested in. It is the problem drinker who is our concern. . . . We cannot predict who will recover, nor have we the authority to decide how recovery should be sought by any other alcoholic.

PROOF OF ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

Sometimes, courts ask for proof of attendance at A.A. meetings.

Some groups, with the consent of the prospective member, have the A.A. group secretary sign or initial a slip that has been furnished by the court together with a self-addressed court envelope. The referred person supplies identification and mails the slip back to the court as proof of attendance.

Other groups cooperate in different ways. There is no set procedure. The nature and extent of any group's involvement in this process is entirely up to the individual group.

This proof of attendance at meetings is *not* part of A.A.'s procedure. Each group is autonomous and has the right to choose whether or not to sign court slips. In some areas the attendees report on themselves, at the request of the referring agency, and thus alleviate breaking A.A. members' anonymity.