

Alcoholics Anonymous as a Resource For Drug & Alcohol Court Professionals

To: Judges, attorneys, probation officers, court-appointed counselors and other referring professionals

Subject: How Alcoholics Anonymous Can Be A Resource • What A.A. does • What A.A. does not do

Cooperation Not Affiliation

Cooperation with the professional community has been an objective of A.A. since our beginnings. We are always seeking to strengthen and expand our communication with you and we welcome your comments and suggestions. Many local A.A. service committees will, upon request, provide informational presentations to you.

What Does A.A. Do?

- A.A. members share their experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem.
- A.A. members offer person-to-person “sponsorship” to the alcoholic coming to A.A. from any source or referred by any source.
- A sponsor helps the new member in working the Twelve Steps and in developing a satisfying life without alcohol.

What A.A. Does *Not* Do

- Provide A.A. recovery for addictions other than alcohol, i.e., drugs, gambling, overeating, etc.
- Provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc.
- Furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover.
- Keep attendance records or case histories.
- Solicit members.
- Provide progress reports on court clients to the referring agency.
- Follow up or try to control its members.
- Provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or any other welfare or social services.
- Accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-A.A. sources.

Court and Treatment Program Referrals

A.A. groups have welcomed many new members from court programs and treatment facilities. Some have come to A.A. on their own; others arrived under a degree of pressure. While the voluntary nature of meeting attendance is part of A.A.’s strength, many A.A.s first attended meetings because attendance was mandated either by someone else or by their own inner discomfort. How someone found us or who referred them isn’t important; their drinking problem is our sole concern. We cannot predict who will recover, nor can we specify how recovery is sought. We know only that frequent exposure to A.A. has helped many of us understand the true nature of alcoholism.

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Proof of Attendance at Meetings

Some judges require written proof that offenders have attended a certain number of meetings. Often, when the court-ordered newcomer attends an A.A. meeting, the group secretary (or other group officer) is willing to sign their first name, or to initial a slip furnished by the court saying so-and-so was at the meeting on a particular date. Hopefully, all involved recognize that neither the group nor its members are “bound” in any way by the signature, nor does this courtesy signify affiliation of the A.A. group with any other program or guarantee that the attendee was present for the entire meeting; it simply illustrates cooperation. Court professionals should understand too, that attendance at A.A. meetings doesn’t guarantee sobriety.

Placing great emphasis on A.A.’s principle of Anonymity, we understand that some A.A. members are uncomfortable when asked to sign their full name or to supply other personal information indicating that they are A.A. members. This cherished Tradition of Anonymity provides protection to all A.A.s from being publically identified as alcoholics, a safeguard especially important to the newcomer. Since each group is autonomous, and providing proof of attendance at meetings is *not* a specific part of A.A.’s program, each group and group member has the right to choose whether or not to sign court slips.

While some groups have elected not to sign court cards, it is our experience that most groups will try to cooperate with our professional friends. In some areas, courts furnish cooperating A.A. groups with sealed, stamped envelopes addressed to the court. In general, the secretary of the group announces that anybody needing an envelope may get it after the meeting. The newcomer takes the envelope, privately writes his or her name and/or return address on it, and mails it. In other areas, each cooperating group has a sheet, furnished by the court, that the secretary announces is available for court ordered newcomers to sign after the meeting. The secretary returns the sheets in envelopes furnished by the referring agency. In this way, it is not the A.A. group, but the prospect’s own signature which affirms he or she was at the meeting.

Singleness of Purpose and Problems Other Than Alcohol

Some professionals refer to alcoholism and drug addiction as “substance abuse” or “chemical dependency,” therefore, nonalcoholics are sometimes introduced to A.A. and encouraged to attend A.A. meetings. A.A.’s singleness of purpose is essential to our successful recovery from alcoholism. Anyone is welcome to attend *open* meetings; *closed* meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous are limited to those who have a problem with alcohol. Any person who has a desire to stop drinking is a member of Alcoholics Anonymous if they say they are.

Reporting to Court Professionals

Regardless of an A.A. member’s vocation, reporting on the “progress” of another A.A. member is strictly outside the scope of what A.A. does.

Local Committees

Local Cooperation With Professional Community (C.P.C.) Committees are generally most willing to discuss with referring professionals ways in which local A.A. members and groups can cooperate while maintaining A.A.’s singleness of purpose, Tradition of Anonymity and meeting integrity. Communication is the key.

For more information, or to arrange a meeting with a local committee member, contact:

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