

A Message  
to  
Corrections  
Professionals...

Alcoholics Anonymous  
wants to work with you

## **What corrections professionals may want to know about A.A.**

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people whose primary purpose is to stay sober and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. A.A. work is done by A.A. members on a voluntary basis.

A.A. has no central authority and almost no structural organization. A.A. does operate a General Service Office in New York (which acts mostly as a clearinghouse for information, worldwide) and local central or intergroup offices.

Corrections professionals, A.A. members, and those interested in starting a new A.A. group for people in custody will get help from A.A.'s General Service Office. G.S.O. will provide the pamphlet "A.A. in Correctional Facilities," a Group Handbook and other A.A. literature.

Many local A.A. service committees will, upon request, provide informational presentations for your organization. Sessions can be tailored to meet your needs. A typical agenda might include one or several A.A. films and a presentation by one or more A.A. members on "What A.A. Is and What It Is Not."

Please check your local telephone listing or newspapers for the number of Alcoholics Anonymous or contact us online at [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org).

### ***A.A. wants to work with you***

Cooperation with the professional community is an objective of A.A., and has been since our beginnings. We are always seeking to strengthen and expand our communication with you, and we welcome your comments and suggestions. They help us to work more effectively with you in achieving our common purpose: to help the alcoholic who still suffers.

### ***A.A. in correctional facilities***

There are approximately 1,360 A.A. groups meeting in correctional facilities throughout the United States and Canada. Each has a local arrangement between the administrators of the prison, work farm or jail and nearby A.A. groups.

A frequent question is why people in custody have any need of A.A. while they are incarcerated. The answer is that the A.A. program is far more than staying away from alcohol. A.A. has been called a way of life, and its success for groups that meet while in custody shows that this program can help alcoholics live a sober and contented life, both while in custody and after release.

Many people in custody were sentenced for crimes in which alcohol abuse was an important factor. This percentage appears to be somewhat higher among those in facilities for young offenders.

Corrections professionals often find many benefits for those who attend A.A. meetings, and feel that their chance of making it on the outside is improved by participation in the A.A. program.

### ***Groups for people in custody***

The conditions under which a correctional facilities group functions are established by the administration. These regulations are inviolable for A.A. visitors as well as for attendees on the inside. Since regulations *can and do vary*, A.A. members will need to be specifically informed about the rules/regulations of each facility they will enter. To that end, good communication between corrections administrators and local A.A. committees is essential.

Typically, local A.A. members sponsor groups in correctional facilities and work with personnel designated by administrators, as well as with officers of the “inside” A.A. group.

Once a correctional facilities group gets through its early stages, it is very much like other A.A. groups. Except for scheduled visits from the A.A. sponsor and A.A. speakers from outside, there need be no extra “traffic” in the operation of an A.A. group on the inside.

### ***Re-entry and parole***

Experience shows that when alcoholics who attend A.A. meetings inside go promptly to A.A. on the outside, they are likely to stay sober — and free. However, if they put it off until they “get settled,” they may never get to A.A.

A.A. can help minimize this risk. Before A.A. members in custody are actually released, there is usually time to get in touch with A.A. in the city or town where they plan to live. The inside sponsor and A.A. contacts can almost always make sure that a real welcome awaits newly-free people — as fellow members of A.A., not former members in custody.

### ***What A.A. does NOT do***

A.A. does not: Furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover; solicit members; engage in or sponsor research; keep attendance records or case histories; join “councils” or social agencies (although A.A. members, groups and service offices frequently cooperate with them); follow up or try to control its members; make medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses; provide detox, rehabilitation or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, or any medical or psychiatric treatment; offer religious services or host/sponsor retreats; engage in education about alcohol; provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money or any other welfare or social services; provide domestic or vocational counseling; accept any money for its services or any contributions from non-A.A. sources; provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc.

### ***Singleness of purpose and problems other than alcohol***

Some professionals refer to alcoholism and drug addiction as “substance abuse” or “chemical dependency.” 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* A.A. meetings.

## Recommended A.A. Reading

Many helping professionals have found the following A.A. World Services, Inc. publications helpful in their work with alcoholics. To obtain copies, contact the General Service Office of A.A. or your local A.A. office.

### *A.A. CONFERENCE-APPROVED LITERATURE:*

THIS IS A.A.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT A.A.

IS A.A. FOR YOU?

BEHIND THE WALLS: A MESSAGE OF HOPE

IT SURE BEATS SITTING IN A CELL

(an illustrated pamphlet for people in custody)

YOUNG PEOPLE AND A.A.

WOMEN IN A.A.

LGBTQ ALCOHOLICS IN A.A.

A.A. FOR THE BLACK AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN ALCOHOLIC

A.A. FOR THE OLDER ALCOHOLIC — NEVER TOO LATE

HISPANIC WOMEN IN A.A.

ACCESS TO A.A.: MEMBERS SHARE ON OVERCOMING BARRIERS

A.A. FOR ALCOHOLICS WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

THE “GOD” WORD: AGNOSTIC AND ATHEIST MEMBERS IN A.A.

THE A.A. MEMBER — MEDICATIONS AND OTHER DRUGS

DO YOU THINK YOU’RE DIFFERENT?

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SPONSORSHIP

IS THERE AN ALCOHOLIC IN YOUR LIFE?

IF YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL

HOW A.A. MEMBERS COOPERATE

A.A. IN YOUR COMMUNITY

A MEMBER’S-EYE VIEW OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

UNDERSTANDING ANONYMITY

A.A. AS A RESOURCE FOR THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL

MANY PATHS TO SPIRITUALITY

### *PERIODICALS:*

ABOUT A.A. (newsletter for helping professionals)

AA GRAPEVINE (the international monthly journal of A.A.)

LA VIÑA (bimonthly, in Spanish)

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

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