

A.A.® Guidelines

Remote Communities

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

The A.A. Guidelines below are compiled from the shared service experience of A.A. members throughout the U.S. and Canada. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference. In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

CARRYING THE MESSAGE TO ALCOHOLICS IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES

The material in these Guidelines has come from the experience and growing pains of A.A. Accessibilities committees, Loners and Internationalists and Remote Communities Committees.

We are privileged to share it with A.A.s throughout the United States and Canada who are carrying our message to alcoholics who would not otherwise be reached. Additional information is available in the Remote Communities section of GSO's website at www.aa.org/remote-communities-committees or you can contact GSO's Accessibilities Desk (access@aa.org) directly.

WHAT IS A REMOTE COMMUNITY?

In Toronto in July 1996, the first Remote Communities Conference was held with 15 Area Delegates. At that time, it was determined that a remote community would be defined as any community to which it was difficult to carry the message because of language, culture or geography.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF REMOTE COMMUNITIES?

Language

- Individuals seeking help with a drinking problem who are not able to access the message in a language they can speak, read or understand.
- Other language access problems arise for members of the Deaf and Deaf-Blind communities in parts of the country where no ASL meetings are available.

Geography

- Those with accessibility challenges, including those who are homebound, or those who live in facilities like hospitals or nursing homes where there is no access to A.A.
- Geographically distant communities, for instance in northern Canada, Alaska or other rural parts of North America.
- Note: Those who are part of remote communities because of geography may not have access to the technologies (like high-speed internet) that make online meetings possible (see below).

Culture

- A.A. is a diverse fellowship which includes many different cultures and identities. While many alcoholics feel quite comfortable in any A.A. group, some AAs have shared that at times they find it easier to attend a special interest AA meeting for identification purposes as an alcoholic and to be able to be open about certain person experiences. For example, individuals might feel most comfortable sharing in a women's meeting, an LGBTQ A.A. meeting, a young people's meeting or meetings designated as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color).
- Some individuals may face additional burdens of stigma because of religious or cultural prohibitions on consuming alcohol which can make identifying as an alcoholic particularly difficult.

In each of these cases, whether communities are remote because of language, culture or geography, Remote Communities trusted servants endeavor to work with those communities to offer "the hand of A.A." in whatever ways that community finds most useful and to learn from those individuals and members who are part of remote communities.

PURPOSE

Remote Communities Committees and Accessibilities Committees work to ensure equal access those in remote communities. Committees focus on overcoming barriers that could make it hard to access the A.A. program — barriers such as geography, language or culture.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Because there are so many kinds of remote communities, there is no one-size-fits-all way to get started. Perhaps the first step would be to contact your local area committee and, if there is an existing Accessibilities committee, ask to be connected to the members doing work with Remote Communities. If there is no work being done with Remote Communities in your local area, you may have to work with other trusted servants to determine what kinds of outreach is needed.

- To reach groups that are geographically isolated, you might check with your Central office/ Intergroup office, Delegate

or other Area trusted servants. They may know of groups or individuals who find it difficult to attend local A.A. events because of the distance or expense of traveling.

- To reach members who are physically, culturally or linguistically isolated, working with CPC committees to share the A.A. message with professionals who work with the elderly, clergy, social service staffers, medical providers or others who come into contact with individuals who might be isolated could be a useful first step.
- If you know there is a community of people in your area who do not speak the language(s) spoken at local AA meetings, you might work with local intergroup or literature chair to acquire A.A. materials in those other languages.
- Additional suggestions for Remote Communities work can be found in the Accessibilities Workbook and the Accessibilities Kit.

EXPERIENCE STRENGTH AND HOPE: SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSING REMOTE COMMUNITIES

“In areas where these populations are not being reached, Accessibilities Committees may support the work of reaching out to Remote members in a number of ways:

- Organize regular telephone/teleconferencing/video conferencing meetings with members in remote communities for both recovery and service meetings.
- Identify community resources and leaders within specific ethnic and cultural communities, such as local media outlets; places of worship; medical providers, social clubs, and schools. Coordinate with CPC/PI committees to provide community organizations with PSAs, A.A. literature and presentations, to help establish ongoing communication.
- Make sure there is an A.A. presence in underrepresented areas — consider starting meetings in communities where none exist.
- Keep local members informed regarding Regional or Local Forums or other A.A. service events that may be occurring in their areas.
- Provide regular reports — in accessible formats — of service workshops, district meetings, and other service information that will help keep these communities connected to the whole of A.A.
- Shared experience for carrying the message to members who are Deaf or hard of hearing, including how groups have used the services of professional ASL interpreters, can be found in the GSO Guidelines for Sharing the A.A. Message with the Alcoholic Who Is Deaf.
- Some communities have found it useful to budget funds specifically to help cover the travel costs for remote members to attend Round-ups, Assemblies, Conferences or Forums.

RELATIONSHIP TO ACCESSIBILITIES COMMITTEES

In many parts of the country, Remote Communities work falls under the umbrella of the Accessibilities Committee. In other places, two separate chairs may be elected, and encouraged to work together. In either case, they share much: both roles are focused on ensuring that everyone who wants it is able to access the message of hope and recovery from alcoholism through Alcoholics Anonymous.

LONERS-INTERNATIONALISTS MEETING

One resource for A.A. members in Remote Communities is the Loners-Internationalists Meeting (*LIM*), a bimonthly postal mail and email meeting with sharing from Loners (individuals with no A.A. meetings nearby), Homers (individuals who are unable to attend AA meetings due to disability or circumstance), Internationalists (A.A. members on seagoing vessels for extended period), Port Contacts and Loner Sponsors. To join the Loners and Internationalists Meeting, members just fill out a form so that GSO staff can add them to the directory and share the bimonthly newsletter with them.

Coordinated by GSO, LIM is, at this time, only available in English. But members who speak languages other than English can contact GSO to learn about other resources that may be available in other parts of the A.A. world.

ONLINE RESOURCES AND OTHER TECHNOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE

There are many digital resources available online for Remote Communities that have access to the Internet. Many of these are available through the web site www.aa.org. For instance, on aa.org, members will find access to A.A. literature (both in free pdf form and online ordering for physical books and digital downloads.) The aa.org website also features video and audio content, and links to useful resources like the Meeting Guide App and tools for finding A.A. near you.

Video and audio content produced by Alcoholics Anonymous can also be found on YouTube.

The AA Grapevine and La Viña have a separate website (www.aagrapevine.org), where members can sign up for the app or print version of the magazine, access Grapevine and La Viña archives, listen to the Grapevine podcast and read stories on a variety of recovery from alcoholism-related topics.

One resource that has been particularly useful for many remote communities is the Online A.A. Intergroup (OIAA.org). As an intergroup organization for meetings held online, OIAA and the many online meetings offer remote members who have internet access (or phone access) a way to join groups, attend meetings, participate in service work and find fellowship.

RELATIONSHIP TO GSO

GSO maintains a mailing list of area and district Accessibilities Committee chairpersons and Remote Communities chairpersons (in the U.S. and Canada). Committee chairpersons receive the Accessibilities Committee Workbook, and are on the mailing list for *Box 4-5-9*, which sometimes contains a section on Remote Communities.

SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCE

Please keep in touch with the GSO Accessibilities Desk (access@aa.org) to share your activities and experiences in carrying the A.A. message to Remote Communities. We look forward to hearing from you!

Some useful publications:

A.A. for the Native North American **(P-21)**

A.A. for the Black and African American Alcoholic **(P-51)**

A.A. and the Armed Services **(P-50)**

A.A. for the Older Alcoholic **(P-22)**

Do You Think You're Different? **(P-13)**

Many Paths to Spirituality **(P-84)**

A.A. for Alcoholics with Mental Health Issues **(P-87)**

LGBTQ Alcoholics in A.A. **(P-32)**

Women in A.A. **(P-5)**

The "God" Word Agnostics and Atheist Members in A.A. **(P-86)**

Understanding Anonymity **(P-47)**

Young People in A.A. **(P-4)**

Catalog/Order Forms:

Literature Catalog (includes A.A.W.S. and AA Grapevine material) **(F-10)**

AA Grapevine resources (English and Spanish):

Other resources on the

AA Grapevine website at <https://www.aagrapevine.org/>
and the

La Viña website at <https://www.aalavina.org>

