

# Accessibilities WORKBOOK

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This Workbook is service material, reflecting A.A. experience shared at the General Service Office. A.A. workbooks are compiled from the practical experience of A.A. members in the various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. & Canada).

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\* Many committees used to use the term "Special Needs," however a 2016 General Service Conference Advisory Action recommended replacing that term with "Accessibilities."



## Introduction

*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.*

In line with A.A.'s Responsibility Declaration, this Workbook is designed to help Accessibilities Committees explore, develop and offer resources to make the Alcoholics Anonymous message and participation in our program of recovery available to all alcoholics who reach out for it.

While we all need to access, receive and carry the message of recovery and wish to have the same measure of privileges and responsibilities with regard to Twelfth Step work, sponsorship, and speaking at A.A. and non-A.A. meetings as other members, for some there are significant barriers that must be overcome to insure full participation in A.A.

For some A.A. members, a six-inch step can be an insurmountable obstacle. A locked access door, a blocked ramp or parking problem can make it impossible to get to a meeting. Some members are ill, homebound or living in retirement or skilled nursing facilities; others are blind or deaf or have vision or hearing loss; some may learn, read, or process information differently; some may be wheelchair users; and still others may use canes or walkers, or have other mobility-related needs. Literature may be hard to understand. Childcare issues may make it impossible to attend regular meetings. Remote geography or cultural differences may hinder contact with other members.

Accessibility challenges apply to all alcoholics who have difficulty participating in Alcoholics Anonymous, whether those are mental, physical, geographic, cultural, or other factors that vary among people. Some of these alcoholics may experience barriers to accessing the A.A. message, including the literature, meetings, sponsorship, Twelfth Step work, and the service structure.

Whatever the access barrier may be, the goal of our members and especially those who serve on Accessibilities Committees, is to find solutions to help ensure every alcoholic can participate in A.A. meetings, Twelfth Step work, and A.A. service.

So, what can be done to make A.A. readily accessible to all?

The following information is meant to assist Accessibilities Committees in removing obstacles to participation and to ensure A.A. remains as inclusive as possible to all alcoholics.

A wide variety of Accessibilities material is available that can help in this effort, including literature in braille, American Sign Language (ASL), and easy-to-read pamphlets in English, as well as in other languages, in regular and large print. For a detailed list, information is provided at the end of this guide titled "A.A. Literature and Audio-Visual Material for Accessibilities" with instructions for placing orders.



## How to Get Started

### *A Few Suggestions on Getting Started*

- Keep it simple! Start small.
- When local groups voice a need for an Accessibilities Committee, members can be notified and encouraged to participate through their Group Service Representative (GSR). Area, district or central office newsletters are also effective communication tools to let members know a committee is being formed. The District Committee Member (DCM) or other area officers could also be invited.

If practical, invite one or more A.A.s experienced in Cooperation With the Professional Community (CPC), Public Information (PI) or Treatment service in nearby communities to attend early meetings to share how they got started.

- In addition to this Workbook, study the basic materials listed below. Have extra copies available for those attending the start-up meeting.
  - *Service Pamphlet*: “Serving All Alcoholics.”
  - *A.A. Guidelines*: “Accessibility for All Alcoholics,” “Sharing the A.A. Message with the Alcoholic Who Is Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing.”
  - *Large-Print Recovery Pamphlets*: “This Is A.A.,” “Is A.A. for Me?,” “Frequently Asked Questions About A.A.,” “The Twelve Steps Illustrated.”
  - *Large Print Booklet*: “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic.”
  - *Recovery Pamphlet*: “Access to A.A.: Members Share on Overcoming Barriers”
- At the first meeting, after everyone has been introduced, ask experienced A.A. members to briefly share their suggestions for working together as a committee.
- Develop a committee membership list from those attending the meeting.
- A.A. committees find that regular meetings help to keep their services moving forward, and provide opportunities to iron out any difficulties. It is important to have regularly scheduled dates and times for these meetings.
- Once the new committee members are comfortable with the basic Accessibilities literature, the committee can decide what activity is a priority for their A.A. community.
- Local Accessibilities Committees sometimes provide GSO with copies of locally developed Accessibilities flyers, pamphlets, etc. GSO is always interested in gathering local experience to be shared as a resource to other Accessibilities Committees.



## Forming an Accessibilities Committee

Once you decide to form an Accessibilities Committee, it is a good idea to prioritize what the needs are in your A.A. community and identify A.A. members who are available to get the job done. It is also important for the committee to share with the Fellowship at as many levels as possible. In some instances, the first task for a committee is to inform the A.A. members in their area or district about what the Accessibilities Committee does and doesn't do. It is also important for the committee to share its planned activities and what they have learned with the Fellowship as widely as possible.

It is also helpful to share your activities and ideas with the General Service Office for possible inclusion in GSO's newsletter, *Box 4-5-9*. Accessibilities Committee members can reach out to other A.A.s through participation in their group's and other business meetings. Let the telephone answering service or intergroup/central office know how to reach the committee if they receive a request for an Accessibilities contact.

The A.A. program works when an alcoholic wants help and A.A. is on hand to give that help.

### *Qualifications for Committee Members*

Experience suggests that solid sobriety, a knowledge of A.A. Traditions and dependability are helpful qualifications for members interested in serving on an Accessibilities Committee. The committee may include A.A. members who liaise with local district and intergroup/central office. Committee procedures and qualifications vary with each area and district. The first task of the committee is to listen to requests from groups and explore possible solutions.

It is always beneficial to include committee members who have accessibility concerns themselves and provide information for them and others in accessible formats.

### *Qualifications for Area Chairpersons*

In some areas the Accessibilities chairperson is appointed by the chairperson of the area general service committee; in other areas the chairperson is elected by assembly members. The chairperson generally serves a two-year term. Candidates for this position are usually required to have several years of current and continuous sobriety and experience in committee work at the area and local levels.

### *Keeping Committee Members Informed*

Regularly scheduled committee meetings help keep everyone informed of activities and commitments and also provide opportunities to share problems and solutions.

1. A notice to committee members about a forthcoming Accessibilities Committee meeting will improve attendance.
2. Minutes are an important record of the committee's discussions and group conscience decisions and also allow new members to become familiar with past committee actions and ideas. It is recommended that minutes are available in accessible formats to support full participation on the committee.

3. Area Accessibilities Committees may periodically distribute a newsletter as a means of sharing ideas with district and intergroup/central office Accessibilities Committees. It is recommended that newsletters are available in accessible formats to support full participation on the committee.

### *Working With Other Accessibilities Committees*

There is a definite need for good communication between Accessibilities Committees, not only within general service areas and districts but throughout our service structure. Many areas, states, provinces and regions hold conventions, conferences and roundups in addition to their assemblies. These are ideal opportunities to plan special meetings or workshops for members of Accessibilities Committees. It is also the responsibility of the committee to pass along information and requests from the groups to the district, Area, and the General Service Office.

### *Getting on the General Service Office's Mailing List for Accessibilities Committee Chairpersons*

The General Service Office maintains a mailing list of committee chairpersons. GSO's Accessibilities desk distributes this list to new committee chairs in a welcome packet so new chairs are able to contact other committees to ask for experience, suggestions, etc. Also, GSO's Accessibilities desk sends reports to committee chairpersons with information about GSO's Accessibilities activities, as well as collected experience from local Accessibilities Committees.

It is the responsibility of the committee chairperson to pass along information received from GSO to committee members. Once your committee has been formed and elections held, please send the following chairperson contact information to your area registrar or area secretary as well as to the General Service Office, Box 4-5-9, Grand Central Station, New York, New York 10163; or email: [access@aa.org](mailto:access@aa.org).

- the chairperson's name and postal address
- telephone number and cell phone number (if available)
- e-mail address (if available)
- area and district number (or intergroup/central office).

### **Suggested Activities for Accessibilities Committees**

Here are some suggested activities that can help Accessibilities Committees effectively share information regarding the work they are doing with A.A. groups, districts, areas, and events where A.A. members gather.

- Create a list of the Accessibilities Committee's service priorities — pick one or two project ideas and focus on those goals.
- Coordinate Accessibilities workshops at the group, district or area level.
- Hold regular Accessibilities Committee meetings and prepare minutes of these meetings.
- Submit a request for an Accessibilities Committee budget for stated projects from a group, district or Area when needed.

- Conduct a survey of meetings that are accessible to people in wheelchairs and add this information to local meeting lists/“Where and Whens” (wheelchair accessibility includes both the entrance to the meeting and access to bathroom facilities).
- Conduct a survey of local, district or area meetings with American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation and add this information to local meeting lists/“Where and Whens.”
- Help arrange for American Sign Language interpreters at A.A. meetings.
- Videotape professional interpreters signing A.A. meetings, for posting on social media, local A.A. websites, or sharing with members who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.
- Make A.A. informational presentations at schools for the blind, deaf and hard-of-hearing; vocational rehabilitation agencies; rehabilitation centers for people with brain injuries; and centers for those with intellectual challenges or differences.
- Work closely with Public Information (PI), Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC), Corrections, and Cooperation with the Elder Community (CEC) to inform the public and appropriate agencies that A.A. is accessible to alcoholics.
- Arrange meetings for A.A. members who do not have regular access to A.A. meetings, e.g. in hospitals; rehabilitation centers for those with injuries or physical differences; residences for those with intellectual or information processing challenges; and those in assisted living or skilled nursing facilities. Arrange for committee members to make presentations at such facilities to provide information about Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Compile and maintain a list of members who are willing to provide transportation to and from meetings and other A.A. functions.
  - Some local committees shared that they coordinate individuals willing to give a ride to elderly, blind and others who unable to drive. While A.A. does not offer these services individual members can do this at their own discretion. Some local committees do not include arranging rides. Each group autonomously decides on such matters, considering relevant factors such as liability.
- Have members of your committee or other volunteers read and record an A.A. book on tape for a member who is blind or may no longer be able to hold a book.
- Take a meeting to homebound A.A. members along with two or more members of the Fellowship.
- Provide Accessibilities workshops and assistance to people with disabilities at conventions, conferences, service weekends, service meetings, special events, etc.
- Gather local information and identify outside local resources regarding accessibility requirements and options.
- Provide literature/information in formats that help people with emotional, mental or physical challenges to engage in carrying the A.A. message.
- Committee members might familiarize themselves with how the principles of accessibility apply to websites and other digital content, then work with local trusted servants to ensure that local A.A. web sites can be accessed by members who have visual, hearing, cognitive, or motor challenges or others who use assistive technology. One useful resource for members is the Technology in A.A. Forum, a site run by A.A. members for members at <https://tiaa-forum.org/>.

## **Suggestions for Working with an A.A. Member or Newcomer Who Is Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing**

The following is sharing from a longtime A.A. member who is also an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter:

“In conversations with A.A. members who are interested in helping a Deaf person it is vital to treat the Deaf person with the same warmth as you would any other person who is new to A.A. or a visitor to your group. For example:

- Greet the person with a handshake.
- Escort the person to the coffee service area and offer them coffee or a soft drink if available.
- Introduce yourself by writing a note to welcome them to Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Ask if there is anything that the group can do to help them access the meeting or literature.

Some other suggestions and reminders from the Fellowship include:

- Remember American Sign Language is not the same as English. Some Deaf members might not be as comfortable with literature in written English.
- Some members have shared that they use the “talk to text” feature on their phones, so that the Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing member can read what they are saying.
- Some Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing members use a variety of assistive technologies, including Internet Relay, video chatting and different captioning programs for phone calls and live events.
- Deaf members and Hard-of-Hearing members each have different life experiences and different challenges. Carrying the message to these communities may require different kinds of approaches. For instance, some members experienced hearing loss later in life. These members may be more comfortable with written English, while those raised in the Deaf world may prefer ASL.

Another member who is Hard-of-Hearing shared additional suggestions to facilitate communication that can help at both service and recovery meetings:

“Members can arrange meeting room chairs in a circle, not in straight lines. The more faces I can see, the better I can ‘hear’ the speakers. The better the lighting is in the room, the better I can see lips to read them. You can tap me lightly on the shoulder before you start to talk to me. In a group setting, you can occasionally tell me who is talking, or what the topic of conversation is. You can signal me if I start to speak while someone else is talking. You can turn off the fans to eliminate background noise.”

[AA Grapevine, September 2010]

Other helpful suggestions include:

1. Discuss the literature available for Deaf alcoholics, including service material and recent Grapevine issues featuring Accessibilities articles.
2. Show a portion of the ASL video, 'Alcoholics Anonymous.'
3. Learn signs such as: A.A., sober, alcohol, problem, love, better, improve, serenity prayer, number signs 1 through 12, sobriety date, happiness-joy-sober, jail, hospital, time, one day, pay attention, hope, sponsor, meeting leader, peace, ask, etc.
4. Ask a Deaf person to share their experience, strength, and hope regarding any obstacles they may have faced in receiving the A.A. message.
5. Suggest using 3x5 cards for the Steps and prayers from *Alcoholics Anonymous*.
6. Include Deaf people on the workshop committee.

### **Suggestions for Working with an A.A. Member or Newcomer Who Is Blind, Deafblind or Visually Impaired (Low Vision)**

- Members who are blind, deafblind and vision impaired are active in home groups and service positions all over the world. Some report experiencing accessibility challenges. These include:

- Difficulty finding meetings located in churches and other buildings that lack signage in braille
- Difficulty accessing content on local and area web sites that has not been created with accessibility in mind
- Not being able to access all of A.A.'s literature
- Challenges with participating in A.A. fellowship

A.A. members and groups have adopted different strategies for helping newcomers meet these challenges, including:

- Involving blind, deafblind or visually impaired members in any planning the group does
- Consider selecting meeting location that is "accessible." One member writes, "when we were looking for a new location, we considered a lot of church basements, but ended up finding a room at a community college that has many accessibility features including ramps, handicapped bathrooms, wide doorways and braille signage."
- Members can include extra details on the Meeting Guide listing that will help a blind, deafblind or visually impaired person find the specific room where a meeting is held.
- Members might consider offering rides to members with vision impairments
- Having a greeter can help ensure that members can find their way

- Members should introduce themselves to the blind, deafblind or visually impaired member and ask if they need assistance finding a place to sit, or if they would like a cup of coffee or if they need to know where rest rooms are located.
- A.A. members can familiarize themselves with what literature GSO offers in braille or audio formats (see page tk of this workbook).
- Also to note, many (if not most) blind members use some kind of screen reader or braille reader that turns a pdf of written text into audio or braille. A.A. members may want to familiarize themselves with how to access audio and pdfs of A.A. books, pamphlets and service material.

### **Suggestions for Working with an A.A. Member or Newcomer Who Has Mobility Challenges**

The Accessibility Checklist for Meetings and Groups offers many suggestions for groups that want to ensure they are aware of accessibility challenges their members might encounter.

Members have reported that it has been helpful to communicate regularly with their landlords about accessibility challenges members face. Sometimes it is possible to switch meeting rooms, gets keys for an elevator or use a door with ramp access.

### **Suggestions Related to Service Animals**

Many Accessibilities Committees find that it can be helpful to remind members that service animals are not pets. As a result some groups have clarified their announcements by saying that pets are not allowed; this does not affect a person's ability to bring a service animal.

Some Accessibilities Committees have held workshops to inform groups about the role of service animals and other ways groups can take action to carry the message to all alcoholics.

Since A.A. never owns, but only rents property — very often church basements — group member trusted servants may wish to request a meeting with their landlord to talk about this issue.

With the question of Service Animals, groups are guided by their own group conscience. The better informed the group conscience, the better the decisions the group can make.

## **Shared Experience from an A.A. Member who Volunteers as an American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter**

“My experience is that, although I am interpreting our A.A. program of recovery into American Sign Language, my service to a recovering deaf person is the same as the help I provide to other recovering individuals. I explain the difference between closed and open meetings in case they want to bring another person to interpret that is not a member of A.A., a person bound by the professional confidentiality code.

“I have revealed my membership in A.A. to a local minister who is an active supporter of the deaf community (his church provides special services to the deaf). I keep him informed of local A.A. functions, such as A.A. group or individual anniversaries that are open to anyone interested in A.A. He and deaf persons have attended these A.A. functions, where he has assisted me in interpreting. I also stay in touch with the local State office that assists deaf people.

“I own a copy of the American Sign Language video *Alcoholics Anonymous* and found it very helpful in learning to properly interpret the contents in American Sign Language. I have loaned my copy to a deaf person who has found it very helpful. Several other deaf persons in my home state have found the video helpful as well.”

## **Suggestions for Working with the Elder Community**

Extending the hand of A.A. to older alcoholics can offer hope to a population that is all too frequently isolated and fearful. The support and recovery that membership in A.A. brings can be the doorway to a new life — regardless of one’s age.

Symptoms of alcoholism can be mistaken as symptoms of other disorders, such as depression or dementia.

Even when they ask for help, many older adults have difficulty getting to A.A. meetings; they may have trouble driving or walking, and shrinking social networks can sometimes mean that fewer friends are available to help them.

This is why elderly outreach programs have become so important within Alcoholics Anonymous.

The A.A. message can also be carried to professionals at social service agencies assisting elders, as well as elder care facilities, assisted living and skilled nursing homes. Many A.A. members reach out to elder alcoholics within one’s group, including those who need assistance getting to the meeting and participating in the meeting as well as those who become homebound. And remember, some of those elder alcoholics who need assistance may have long-term sobriety and can serve as valuable resources for the group — as sponsors and keepers of A.A. tradition and experience.

In some communities, older members may prefer morning or midday meetings, which can be easier to get to than meetings held later in the day.

Committee members have shared that once they are shown how to use the technology, many homebound A.A. members enjoy online meetings. One helpful resource is the Online A.A. Intergroup web site: <https://aa-intergroup.org/>

An Accessibilities Committee might wish to round up some tech-savvy members willing to help anyone struggling to use resources such as the Meeting App, which can deliver search results filtered by which are online, wheelchair-accessible, etc.

## **Shared Experience from an A.A. Member Working with Elder Alcoholics**

“Reaching out to elderly alcoholics has been a passion of mine for a number of years. Partly it’s because of my own age — I’m 75 and I understand the challenges of staying sober while you are aging. In particular things like loss of health and mobility, financial insecurity, the death of loved ones. It isn’t easy.

“Forming an Accessibilities Committee is a good start. The committee can send out letters to health fairs and geriatric physicians and assisted living centers. I decided to focus on senior centers. Senior citizen centers are generally pretty easy to approach. Most of the staff let us put literature, Big Books and Grapevines in their libraries. We took panels into senior centers, for seniors and staff alike — sometimes they weren’t alcoholics, but knew that so-and-so was at home drinking too much.

“Another approach people can use is to start a Seniors in Sobriety (SIS) meeting, or at least designate certain meetings Senior Friendly (SF). Seniors isolate themselves, they don’t identify, they retreat, they decline. They need to know they are welcome. When I got sober it was the ‘meeting after the meeting’ that was so important, one alcoholic talking to another. This is what seniors need — another person to talk with about sobriety and these special challenges older people face.”

*[Box 4-5-9, Winter 2015]*

Whether extending the hand of A.A. to elders already sober in A.A. or to elder newcomers, Accessibilities Committees help insure A.A.’s program of recovery is available to anyone who has a desire to stop drinking, regardless of their age. Such service could include the following:

- Coordinating schedules and member participation to provide home meetings — in person, by phone, or over the Internet — for elderly or homebound members of A.A.
- Providing assistance and information to support transportation of the elderly to meetings, whether door-to-door or from the parking spot to a chair.
- Gathering and passing on local, shared experience for types of meeting formats used in elder care facilities, community senior centers, and home settings.
- Gathering and passing on local, shared experience for guidelines and suggestions for working within elder care facilities.
- Conducting workshops on any of the various topics that relate to this service area.
- Having a contact person who calls if someone has missed a few meetings, whether they are elderly or not. If they are sick or incapacitated in some way, the liaison can offer help to get them to meetings or have a meeting brought to them.

It can be beneficial to include committee members who experience access barriers. Whenever possible, provide information for them and others in formats that are accessible.



## **Suggestions for Working with Parents or Other Caregivers**

Getting to meetings and participating in other service-related A.A. activities can be difficult for parents with childcare responsibilities or those who have other caregiving responsibilities, such as taking care of a sick parent or family member. Accessibilities Committees can support such A.A. members in a number of ways:

- Organize and conduct local workshops on childcare at meetings;
- Research any legal issue that might be involved in setting up child-friendly meetings;
- Work with the local intergroup/central office to develop a list of meetings where kids are welcome or childcare is available;
- Develop a list of A.A. members willing to participate in phone meetings with parents/caregivers who cannot attend meetings in person;
- Provide single parents or other caregivers with a list of internet meetings.

### **Shared Experience from an A.A. Member on Childcare at Meetings**

“As a newcomer, I was showered with love, attention, and mottos about ‘keep coming back, *no matter what!*’ I grew, matured, leveled out, and loved back while becoming a devoted member of my home group...

“When my baby was born, and my need for meetings was even greater, I began to run into a problem: children aren’t always welcome in Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. That includes women’s groups!

“Financially and practically speaking, there are conditions to being a parent that are not unique to me that can challenge a meeting schedule. Childcare, for one, is very expensive. Many newly sober mothers have husbands who are in the program as well and have meeting schedule problems of their own. Still others are single parents with tight budgets...

“I decided to take positive action! I began a meeting we call Mothers in Sobriety. It is a closed, nonsmoking meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. We have everything every other meeting has, including the Twelve Steps, Traditions, coffee, and lots of love. We also have anywhere from two to twelve kids running around the room at any given time...

“Our format is simple. After the Steps are read, prayers prayed, announcements made, we pass out a basket of toys, paper, coloring books, crayons, cookies, and kisses for all.

“We even have a rather special meeting time: 10:00 AM. We found that this is a good time for mothers and children alike. We are fresher and calmer at this time than at the usual meeting times.”

[AA Grapevine, September 1987]

## Suggestions for Working with Underserved or Remote Communities

Many A.A. members live in underserved or remote communities — communities that are difficult to reach because of geography, language or culture. It could be a community that is remotely situated, or right around the corner. All suffering alcoholics should be afforded the opportunity to receive the A.A. message and participate in the A.A. program of recovery. There are A.A. members and groups committed to seeking solutions to ensure access.

In areas where these populations are not being reached, Accessibilities Committees may support such A.A. 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/P.I. committees to provide such, culturally significant audiences with PSAs, A.A. literature and presentations, to help establish ongoing communication;
- Make sure there is an A.A. presence in underserved areas — consider starting meetings in communities where none exist;
- Work directly with existing members in underserved communities to take regular Meetings onto Native American reservations, into inner city communities, special language enclaves, remote areas, or help set up online meetings and mobile collaborations;
- Insure that A.A. members in remote areas are aware of the *Loners/Internationalist Meeting (LIM)*, which shares correspondence from A.A. members in isolated areas, at sea, or home- or hospital-bound;
- 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.
- Request the Remote Communities Resource list from Accessibilities Coordinator at GSO, or find it online on the Remote Communities page.
- Familiarize yourself with A.A. Guidelines for Remote Communities.
- Read and share the Remote Communities Communicator, an annual newsletter created by delegates for delegates (available on request from GSO, in English, Spanish and French).

## **Shared Experience from an A.A. Member on Working with Remote Communities**

“Inspired by a suggestion brought forth at our latest Eastern Canada Regional Forum, our committee is now adopting groups in these communities by sending them A.A. books and pamphlets, speaker tapes, and past issues of the Grapevine as well as new subscriptions. We also send them flyers of upcoming events in our area and give them the names of A.A.s who are willing to be telephone buddies (and sometimes even temporary sponsors), so they can have someone else to talk to outside of their small group. I’m being told by these members that they no longer feel isolated — they feel very much a part of our area.”

[AA Grapevine, February 2002]

Other challenges in carrying the message to underserved populations can relate to culture and language.

According to a local Native American newsletter, Native Americans are dying at twice the average rate from the spiritual malady known as alcoholism. “Every vision, every hope, every new beginning needs to be held on to and nurtured in order to bring recovery into the grasp of the people dying out there,” the newsletter said. “Every one of us who has experienced that vision of recovery, unity, and service has a responsibility to carry it to the next suffering alcoholic, whether they live on a remote reservation or in the middle of the big city.”

Another member shared additional experience regarding language and cultural challenges.

“First, sometimes newcomers think that they must choose between A.A.’s program of recovery and their native cultural and spiritual practices.

“Second, because communities are small and everyone knows one another, maintaining privacy is, at times, a problem. When confidences are broken, people are less likely to support the group and attend A.A. meetings on the reservation.

“Finally, A.A.’s newness on some reservations results in a shortage of experienced sponsorship for newcomers. Alcoholics Anonymous on many reservations is young in years of recovery, as well as in years of service. This can contribute to a lack of experienced, strong sponsorship for newcomers arriving from treatment centers. Meetings can tend to become open discussion meetings because of lack of knowledge about A.A.’s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Reservation groups and meetings need support from A.A.s from outside the reservation.”

[AA Grapevine, September 2006]

## Workshops and Presentations

Many Accessibilities Committees have found that workshops — taking a close look at local needs, opportunities and attitudes, as well as the Traditions and service structure — are helpful tools for exploring ideas and methods for carrying the A.A. message to alcoholics with physical, intellectual processing, and mental health challenges.

Other kinds of brief presentations on Accessibilities could serve the same purpose. For example, sharing excerpts from the A.A. Guidelines, material from this Workbook, from *Box 4-5-9* or the Grapevine, might spark ideas for a question and answer session.

A discussion period, in which the entire group breaks up into smaller groups, could focus on the following topics (or topics of your own choosing):

1. Discuss forming an Accessibilities Committee.
2. Review ways of reaching professionals who work with these populations.
3. Share ideas on connecting alcoholics to programs and residential facilities serving alcoholics with physical, intellectual processing, and mental health challenges.
4. List ways of attracting members to this type of Twelfth Step service.
5. Discuss appropriate A.A. literature and audio/visual resources.
6. Discuss the Grapevine as a tool for carrying the A.A. message.

### *General Guidelines for making Presentations about A.A.*

Presentations by A.A. members generally follow an outline that explains what A.A. is and is not, where you can find A.A., and what to expect. For example, many people have seen an A.A. meeting portrayed on television and they assume that attendees must stand up and speak. It is helpful to reassure a potential newcomer or to help a professional understand that newcomers speak only if they want to and that it is possible to sit quietly in an A.A. meeting with no pressure to participate.

In addition to a response to a specific request, regularly scheduled presentations may be set up for either clients or staff at a facility. A recurring presentation is usually coordinated through a local or area Accessibilities Committee. Such presentations are adapted to meet the needs of the attendees. The goal of a presentation to professionals is to impart knowledge about A.A., as well as to foster a cooperative attitude between the facility administration, staff and A.A. The pamphlet “Speaking at Meetings Outside of A.A.” may be a helpful resource. If this type of presentation is new to you, you may wish to consult with your local Cooperation With the Professional Community (CPC) or Public Information (PI) Committee.

### **Some basic suggestions:**

1. Familiarize yourself with A.A. literature that relates to accessibilities, especially this Workbook and the service piece (F-107) “Serving All Alcoholics.”
2. Make brief notes on the topics to be covered. Talk about A.A., not your personal problems and experiences.
3. Never comment on agencies policies or practices!

4. Allocate a certain amount of time to each segment of your presentation. It's better to finish early than to run overtime by trying to present too much information at once. Allow time for questions and answers at the close of your presentation. This is when you can come back to a topic or discussion of interest to your audience.
5. Many professionals find sharing on personal recovery experiences related to the presentation topic to be very powerful. Your story can be very impactful.
6. Work with other members of the Accessibilities Committee or your group to prepare for this presentation. It is also helpful to rehearse your presentation.
7. It may be helpful to bring literature related to the presentation topic, as well as local group and committee contact resources.
8. Inform nonalcoholics in attendance that they are welcome to attend open A.A. meetings to learn more about A.A. Your local CPC committee may have additional relevant resources.

### *Helpful suggestions for presentations to medical and healthcare professionals*

1. Be on time, well-groomed, and courteous.
2. Introduce A.A. and yourself as resources to help the alcoholic with physical, intellectual processing, and mental health challenges, with no opinion on the agency's policies.
3. Invite the facility staff to attend open A.A. meetings. Your local CPC committee may have a program in place for this purpose.
4. Offer to come back for other presentations/discussions to help meet their goals.

### *Helpful suggestions for presentations to people with physical, emotional or mental challenges*

#### **Some basic suggestions:**

1. Avoid drunkalogues. Keep comments strictly to A.A.-related matters. Do not comment on the policies or practices of any facility or professional
2. Always remember that you are representing Alcoholics Anonymous. For many in your audience, this will be their first impression of Alcoholics Anonymous. Make it a good one!

#### *A suggested presentation outline:*

1. **Introduction:** Why you're there (to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous; explain what A.A. is and what it is not).
2. Read and explain the A.A. Preamble.
3. Mention the local A.A. meeting list (with information about accessibilities) and the worldwide availability of A.A.
4. Introduce the potential members to the Meeting Guide app, as appropriate.

5. Share about what a newcomer may expect in A.A. — anonymity, the home group, sponsorship, fellowship, and service.
6. Share about relevant A.A. literature: books, pamphlets, videos, tapes, the Grapevine, La Viña, etc., and where they may be obtained.
7. Always try to leave time for a general question and answer session. Stick to A.A. and your own experience. Steer discussion away from legal or any other outside issues.
8. Thank you and close.

*Suggested card or flyer:*

You may want to leave the following information on a card or flyer so that attendees can easily contact your committee:

*For additional information on Alcoholics Anonymous  
and how we can help, contact:*

(Your Local or Area Accessibilities Committee or Local Intergroup  
or Central Office) at:

Or:     General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous  
          Grand Central Station  
          P.O. Box 459  
          New York, NY 10163  
          Phone: (212) 870-3400  
          E-mail: [access@aa.org](mailto:access@aa.org)

## ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS ACCESSIBILITIES WORKSHOP



### SERVICE IN MOTION



**Date:**  
**Time:**  
**Location**

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*(include note about Accessibility for this event:  
Is the space accessible? Will there be ASL interpretation?)*

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- 2:00 p.m. Chair Opens the meeting with a moment of silence and the Serenity Prayer.  
Read “Why we need a Conference”  
(from page 40 of the 2021 A.A. Service Manual)**
- 2:15 p.m. History of the Accessibilities Committee in (your Area)**
- 2:35 p.m. How the Traditions relate to Accessibilities**
- 2:50 p.m. The Needs of Members who are blind or visually impaired**
- 3:10 p.m. B R E A K**
- 3:30 p.m. The Needs of Members who are deaf or hard-of-hearing**
- 3:50 p.m. The Needs of Members who have Physical Challenges**
- 4:10 p.m. What About the A.A. member who cannot read or write?**
- 4:30 p.m. B R E A K**
- 4:50 p.m. Ask it Basket with questions and answers**
- 5:50 p.m. Close with Responsibility Statement**

**\*\*All meetings will have Sign Language translation provided\*\***

*Sample Event Agenda #1*

**OUR 12TH STEP RESPONSIBILITY—  
ARE WE GOING TO ANY LENGTH?**

**Accessibilities Share-A-Day (year)  
ASL Interpreted**

**Date**

**Time**

**9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

**(9:30 a.m Registration, Breakfast)**

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*(Include information like:  
Wheelchair accessible facility and entire program ASL interpreted.)*

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**Program**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Presenter</b>
9:30 – 10:00 a.m.	Registration & Hospitality	
10:00 – 10:10 a.m.	Welcome Reading of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions	
10:10 – 11:00 a.m.	1st Panel Workshop “Going to Any Lengths to Get Sober” (ESH of Those Who Came Into the Program with Accessibility Challenges) Includes sharing from the floor and/or a Q&A	
	<b>BREAK</b>	
11:10 – 12:00 p.m.	2nd Panel Workshop: “Going to Any Lengths to Stay Sober” (ESH of Those Who later Developed Accessibility Challenges In Sobriety)	
12:00 – 1:00 p.m.	<b>LUNCH</b>	
1:00 – 1:10 p.m.	Experience Strength and Hope: Creating and maintaining a Dear Access Committee	
1:10 – 2:00 p.m.	General Service Office (GSO) Speaker — Liaison for Accessibilities	
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.	Big Meeting & Sobriety Countdown	



## Sample Letter Inviting Members of the Professional Community to Attend a Workshop

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

The \_\_\_\_\_ Area/District/Central Office/Intergroup Accessibilities Committee of Alcoholics Anonymous will hold a workshop for A.A. members and others who are interested in helping alcoholics with physical, intellectual processing, and mental health challenges maintain sobriety through A.A.'s program of recovery.

We would be delighted if you join us on \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ a.m. to \_\_\_\_\_ a.m. A preliminary program for this workshop is enclosed.

It is only through the kind support of so many of our nonalcoholic friends like you that A.A. now has well over two million members in over 180 countries worldwide. We look forward to this opportunity to meet you and share information about A.A.

Please let us know by \_\_\_\_\_ if you will join us.

Sincerely yours,

Jane S., Chairperson  
A.A. Accessibilities Committee

Enclosures: Preliminary program  
Response Form and self-addressed envelope

## Sample Letter to Various Agencies

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

You may be familiar with Alcoholics Anonymous, also known as A.A. It is possible you have patients or clients with a drinking problem who might be interested in learning about A.A. Our A.A. Accessibilities Committee members are available to provide information about A.A. at your convenience.

The enclosed flyer , “A.A. at a Glance,” explains briefly what A.A. is and what it does. We can arrange for someone to answer your questions about A.A. or to introduce your alcoholic patient or client to our fellowship. We are also available to make presentations about A.A. to your staff, patients or clients.

If you are interested in receiving a packet of A.A. information or being contacted by an A.A. member, please contact us at the following telephone number \_\_\_\_\_ or email us at \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

Jane S., Chairperson  
A.A. Accessibilities Committee

Enclosures: “A.A. at a Glance”

**“Sample Letter to Professionals Working  
with People Who are Blind, Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing or  
Face Access Barriers due to other Physical, Intellectual  
Processing, and Mental Health Challenges.**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

You may be familiar with Alcoholics Anonymous, also known as A.A. We of the \_\_\_\_\_ A.A. Accessibilities Committee recognize that there are some alcoholics who face barriers on a daily basis. It is possible you have students (patients or clients), etc. with a drinking problem who might benefit from A.A.’s program of recovery. We would welcome the opportunity to provide information about A.A. or about how our committee is available to try to help alcoholics have access to A.A. in our community regardless of access barriers.

The attached flyer , “A.A. at a Glance,” explains briefly what A.A. is and what it does. We can arrange for an A.A. contact to answer your questions about A.A. or to introduce your alcoholic student, patient, client, etc. to our fellowship. We are also available to make presentations about A.A. to your students, staff, patients or clients.

If you are interested in receiving a packet of A.A. information or being contacted by an A.A. member, please contact us at the following telephone number \_\_\_\_\_ or email us at \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

Jane S., Chairperson  
A.A. Accessibilities Committee

Enclosures: “A.A. at a Glance”

## **Accessibilities Kit Enclosures**

(Literature, Guidelines, Collected Experience)

The Accessibilities Kit is available to area chairs and the Accessibilities Workbook is available to district chairs. GSO mails the Kit or Workbook, with a welcome letter, when a committee chair or local contact is added to GSO's mailing list.

1. *Service Material*: "Serving All Alcoholics,;" "Loners-Internationalists Correspondence Service" "Online Meetings/Online Groups"
2. *A.A. Guidelines*: "Sharing the A.A. Message with the Alcoholic Who Is Deaf;" "Accessibility for All Alcoholics;" "Remote Communities"
3. *Suggested Pamphlets for Accessibilities Committees*: "Access to A.A.: Members Share on Overcoming Barriers;" " The 'God' Word: Agnostic and Atheist Members in A.A.;" "Speaking at Meetings Outside of A.A.;" "A.A. and the Armed Services."
4. *Large-Print Pamphlets*: "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic," "This Is A.A.," "Is A.A. for Me?," "Frequently Asked Questions About A.A. "
5. *Illustrated Pamphlets*: "The Twelve Steps Illustrated."
6. *DVD*: A.A. for the Alcoholic with Special Needs
7. "How It Works"
8. *Box 4-5-9* and Grapevine recent related articles.
9. *About A.A.* newsletter
10. A.A. Conference-Approved Literature catalog.
11. Accessibilities Checklist.

## Literature for Accessibilities Committees

### **A.A. Guidelines**

*Accessibility for All Alcoholics* (MG-16)

*Sharing the A.A. Message with the Alcoholic Who Is Deaf  
or Hard-of-Hearing* (MG-13)

*Remote Communities* (MG-19)

### **Braille**

*Alcoholics Anonymous* (M-34)

Fourth Edition of the Big Book, A.A.'s basic text.

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditionsons* (M-35)

Bill W.'s 24 essays on the Steps and the Traditions.

*Daily Reflections: A Book of Reflections by A.A. Members for A.A. Members  
by A.A. Members for A.A. Members* (M-50)

A reading for each day of the year.

*"This Is A.A."* (M-63)

Introductory pamphlet describing people in A.A. and what they have learned about alcoholism.

*"Is A.A. for You?"* (M-64)

Symptoms of alcoholism are summed up in 12 questions most A.A.s had to answer to identify themselves as alcoholics.

*"Frequently Asked Questions About A.A."* (M-65)

Answers the questions most frequently asked about A.A. by alcoholics seeking help, as well as by their families.

### **Audio Cassettes and CD-ROMS**

*Alcoholics Anonymous* (M-81)

Audio version of the Big Book on 16 CDs in case.  
Includes Fourth Edition stories.

*Alcoholics Anonymous* (M-81A)

Abridged version of Big Book on CD-ROM.

*Alcoholics Anonymous* (MB-1A)

Complete Fourth Edition on 14 cassette tapes.

*Alcoholics Anonymous*(MB-1)

A reading of the first 11 chapters and the first two stories.  
A series of seven cassette tapes in a book-like binder.

*Alcoholics Anonymous* (M-70)

Text version of the Big Book on CD-ROM. 3 CDs in case.

Fourth Edition stories included.

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions on CDs* (M-83)

The Twelve and Twelve on six CDs, containing all the material found in the book version of the Twelve and Twelve. Comes with table of contents booklet.

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (M-83B)

Same as M-83, but with booklet in braille and with braille tabs on CD sleeves.

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (MB-2)

Five cassette tapes in a book-like binder.

*A.A. for the Alcoholic With Special Needs* (M-93)

Audio CD of stories from A.A.s who are hearing and visually impaired, housebound for various illnesses or other disabilities.

*A.A. Comes of Age on CD* (M-84)

Bill W. tells how A.A. started, how the Steps and Traditions evolved, and how the A.A. Fellowship grew and spread overseas.

*Bill Discusses the Twelve Traditions on CD* (M-89)

Soundtrack of video VS-20.

*Three Legacies, By Bill on CD* (M-87)

Co-founder's talk on Recovery, Unity and Service.

*Voices of our Co-Founders on CD* (M-88)

Five excerpts from different talks given by Dr. Bob and Bill W. 28 mins.

*Living Sober* (MB-7)

Four cassette tapes on methods A.A. members have used to stay sober. CD (M-85)

*Pioneers of A.A.* (MB-4)

Three audio cassette tapes of the Pioneers' Stories in Alcoholics Anonymous, Third Edition. CD (M-90)

*"A Brief Guide to A.A."* on CD (M-91)

Recording of several Conference-approved pamphlets, such as A Brief Guide to A.A.; Is A.A. for Me?; This is A.A.; plus the A.A. Preamble; Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; and recovery stories taken from Young People and A.A. and the Third Edition of the Big Book. 90 mins.

## **Large Print**

*Alcoholics Anonymous* (B-16)

Soft-cover, 7" x 10¼", in type size recommended as suitable for the visually handicapped.

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (B-14)

Soft-cover, 7" x 10¼", in type size recommended as suitable for the visually handicapped.

*Living Sober* (B-25)

*Came to Believe* (B-26)

*As Bill Sees It* (B-27)

*A.A. for the Older Alcoholic—Never Too Late* (B-28)

Addresses the older alcoholic, with eight stories of men and women who came to A.A. after the age of 60.

*“This Is A.A.”* (P-56)

*“Frequently Asked Questions About A.A.”* (P-57)

*“How it Works”* (P-10)

An excerpt in large type from Chapter 5 of the Big Book.

*The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service* (BM-33)

Both in a single booklet. The Manual opens with a history of A.A. services; explains the Conference structure and its year-round importance; includes the Conference Charter and General Service Board Bylaws. The Concepts—principles of service that have emerged from A.A.’s service accomplishments and mistakes since its beginning—are set forth by Bill W.

*Daily Reflections* (B-19)

A reading for each day of the year.

## **American Sign Language**

*Alcoholics Anonymous* (VS-1)

Five volume ½” VHS video for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing.

Contains the first 11 chapters, “Dr. Bob’s Nightmare,” the Forewords, “The Doctor’s Opinion,” and the Appendices.

Packaged in attractive blue slipcase.

*Alcoholics Anonymous DVD* (DV-11)

Three-volume DVD (see description of contents above).

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (VS-3)

Five volume ½” video (in slipcase) for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions DVD* (DV-12)

*A.A. for the Alcoholic With Special Needs* (DV-17)

This DVD includes the experience of A.A. members who are hearing and visually impaired, housebound, chronically ill or disabled due to brain damage or stroke. Their stories tell how they found A.A. and are living new and productive lives free from alcohol.

## **Videos**

*Bill’s Own Story* (VS-21)

½” VHS. (For use within A.A. only). Co-founder Bill W. tells of his drinking and recovery. 60 mins. DVD (DV-04)

*Bill Discusses the Twelve Traditions* (VS-20)

½” VHS. (For use within A.A. only). Bill W. tells how the principles

safeguarding A.A. unity developed. 60 mins. DVD (DV-05)

### **Videos (subtitled)**

*Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous* (DV-09)

DVD, English only. Explains the principles of A.A.: what A.A. is and isn't, primary purpose, sponsorship, home group, the Steps and Traditions and basic recovery tools. 15 mins.

*A.A. Videos for Young People* (DV-10)

A collection of four videos, by A.A. members in their teens and early twenties, discussing their experiences in A.A.

*Your A.A. General Service Office, The Grapevine and The General Service Structure* (VS-24) ½" VHS. 22 mins. DVD (DV-07)

### **Illustrated, Easy-To-Read Literature**

*"Is A.A. for Me?"* (P-36)

Based on the 12 questions in "Is A.A. For You?", this 32-page pamphlet is an illustrated, easy-to-read version.

*"Twelve Steps Illustrated"* (P-55)

An easy-to-read version of A.A.'s Twelve Steps. Steps appear at top of each page with simplified text under illustration.

*"It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell"* (P-33)

An illustrated pamphlet which presents the experience of seven inmates who found A.A. while in prison. It also offers suggested do's and don'ts for staying sober after release.

### **Miscellaneous**

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (M-67)

One 3.5" diskette that runs in Microsoft Windows® with four megabytes hard-disk space. Fully word searchable and hyperlinked.

*"Serving All Alcoholics"* (F-107)

A service piece in leaflet format for members interested in carrying the message to alcoholics who have physical, emotional and mental barriers to accessing the program of A.A.

**Note:** The following A.A. Conference-approved literature has been revised so that it can be easily read by people who have been deaf since birth or early childhood or for signing purposes:

*The Serenity Prayer*

*"The Twelve Steps"*

*"The Twelve Traditions"* (short form)

*"The Twelve Traditions"* (long form)



*“How It Works”*

*“A Brief Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous”*

*“Is A.A. for You?”*

*“A Deaf Newcomer Asks”*

**Note:** To obtain a list of resources which provide A.A. Conference-approved literature in braille, American Sign Language (ASL) and on audio or for further information write to:

General Service Office  
Attn: Accessibilities  
P.O. Box 459  
Grand Central Station New York, NY 10163

Or:

Phone: (212) 870-3400  
E-mail: [access@aa.org](mailto:access@aa.org)  
[aa.org](http://aa.org)

## **AA Grapevine and La Viña**

A.A.'s magazines, Grapevine and La Viña, are excellent tools of recovery for alcoholics with diverse needs. Often called A.A.'s “meetings in print,” they are delivered each month and offer sharing about all stages of recovery, including staying sober through tough times, which can be helpful to those who cannot attend meetings. The magazines are also available in audio format by purchasing the Grapevine Online, the Grapevine App, or the Grapevine Complete, which is a combination of both the print and online subscriptions.

Personal stories of recovery can be submitted as audio stories by visiting <http://www.aagrapevine.org/audio-portal>.

The Grapevine's large-print and audio editions of *The Language of the Heart* and *Best of Bill*, as well as Spanish and English-language CDs on topics such as emotional sobriety and spiritual awakening, are other useful tools.

To order AA Grapevine material visit [aagrapevine.org](http://aagrapevine.org) or call 800-631-6025 (toll-free) from U.S. or at 818-487-2091 from non-U.S. locations. Email: [customerservice@aagrapevine.org](mailto:customerservice@aagrapevine.org).

