

Guidelines for AA in Great Britain

From the General Service Office, PO Box 1, 10 Toft Green, YO1 7NJ

AA AND EMPLOYMENT Revised Month Year No 8

The first section of this Guideline is designed to assist Employment Liaison Officers (ELOs) to carry the AA message to employers. It also contains suggestions for AA Groups in industry. The second section has been added to help individual members who are employees.

EMPLOYMENT LIAISON OFFICERS

Since the early days of our Fellowship, AA has sought to carry its message to employers, hence Chapter 10 of the "Big Book" Alcoholics Anonymous. In Great Britain the General Service Conference has considered since 1982 how best to carry the message to the workplace in a structured way. At present Intergroups and Regions support and appoint liaison officers at local level to deal with this branch of service within PI Committees (see Guideline No.7).

The responsibility of ELOs is to carry AA's message to employers in their local area as part of a PI Committee elected and supported by Intergroups and Regions. Employment specifically concerns any organisation employing or serving staff – companies, trade unions and associations, government departments and/or related agencies. An established three years of continuous sobriety with a thorough knowledge of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain is necessary before accepting the role. Willingness to commit to three years' service, being able to devote time during normal business hours – and the ability to deal with a wide range of professional people and talk about AA when invited to do so, are also qualities that have proven to be desirable.

Activities

Experience has shown that a business-approach to employers is most likely to succeed. Often a phone call to ascertain the correct person to contact is required, usually to the Personnel/Human Resources Manager or their assistant, asking for the name and title of the person who deals with alcohol policies or employee welfare. This could be the Human Resources or Personnel Manager, Welfare Officer, Occupational Health Nurse, Health and Safety Officer, Company Doctor or Managing Director. An approach should then be made by telephone to that person, requesting an interview and followed up by a letter of confirmation if requested. (Intergroups and Regions should supply properly headed paper for this purpose.)

Co-operation with employment programmes

Experience has shown that AA can help in the following ways:

- making posters, literature, local contact numbers and details of local meetings available
- offering to talk to staff or management about the AA programme including showing appropriate AA videos
- putting employers in touch with other organisations which have had experience in alcoholism programmes using AA methods
- making available the cumulative experience of over two million recovering alcoholics
- explaining what AA is and how AA can help with the problem of alcoholism in the workplace
- putting employers in direct contact with men and women who have achieved continued sobriety in AA and are willing to share their personal experience freely with any problem drinker who seeks help, and
- by welcoming into the local group the employee who wants to do something about a drinking problem, where he or she will find the environment and friends to help achieve sobriety

AA does not plan or set up alcoholism programmes

It is important to establish that AA does not plan or set up alcoholism programmes for industry. Rather AA should be presented as a community resource available to the employee with a drinking problem. Bodies such as Alcohol Concern and its affiliated Regional Councils, the Medical Council on Alcohol and the Scottish Council on Alcoholism provide such a service and many AA members are active in the work of these. We are reminded that AA has no opinion on outside issues including alcohol policies but that does not mean we cannot co-operate within our Traditions.

Large companies

In large companies, which may have formal programmes for problem drinkers, one employee may be given the job of acting as a counsellor for alcoholic employees. He or she may sometimes be an AA member who has had the necessary training to qualify for such a job. The counsellor generally works closely with the medical department; since this kind of work constitutes professional activity, it is not Twelfth Step work.

AA groups

Some companies that have formal programmes for problem drinkers may sponsor the formation of an AA Group. Tradition 6 reminds us that an AA Group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name, to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose. Experience suggests that an AA Group is most successful when the non-alcoholics who have co-operated limit their "sponsorship" to making facilities available for Group meetings. Meetings held on company premises, whether in company time or not, are within the Traditions of AA – provided no strings are attached. AA Groups within a company made up of entirely employees of that particular company can be helpful in introducing the AA programme to the problem drinker. Experience has indicated that the "specialised" Group is not totally successful unless the newcomer is also encouraged to participate in the activities of regular AA Groups.

Where a company employs a recovering alcoholic as a counsellor an AA Group can usually be set up without difficulty, following traditional AA procedures. In such cases it is appropriate for the counsellor to take his or her place as a member of the Group. Where there is no recovering alcoholic on the company's staff, an outside AA Group may be invited to assist with the responsibility with forming and sponsoring a Group made up of company employees. In most areas the AA Groups should be able to handle all referrals, making "employee only" Groups unnecessary.

Trade unions

Unions should be dealt with in similar ways as employers. However, our experience shows that before contacting local branch officers an initial approach to their headquarters is not only courteous but also beneficial in carrying the AA message. Often they will supply you with details of who to see or may arrange it directly. Many unions and employers organise conferences, trade shows and information meetings. Attendance at these meetings can usually be arranged through the organisers or the support of a friendly contact. The display of literature and provision of information can involve a PI committee with much follow-up work in carrying the message to those who attend.

In summary

Guided by our Traditions the Employment Liaison Officer can:

- act as a contact for employers within an Intergroup area
- work as part of a PI committee
- share information with other Intergroup officers especially the Regional Employment Liaison Officer
- offer our programme of recovery to all problem drinkers who come to the notice of employers.

AA welcomes any opportunity to

- Meet with any employer to discuss ways AA can operate
- Present meetings to explain the AA programme of recovery to employees
- Take employees with a drink problem to AA meetings

ELO READING LITERATURE

AA Service Handbook for Great Britain

Speaking at non-AA meetings

How AA members Co-operate with Professionals

A member's eye view of AA

AA Fact File

The Problem Drinker in Employment

AA Information Sheet for Employers

When Drink Stops Working

[If you are a professional AA wants to work with you](#)

AA as a resource for employers

A Brief Guide to AA

AA at a glance

A4 Display leaflets (with local contact numbers)

Contact Postcards (with local contact number)

Is AA for You?

Who Me?

List of local meetings (without telephone contact numbers)

AA Video "An inside view of AA for Professionals"

AA Video "One Day at a Time"

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS IN EMPLOYMENT

Personal Anonymity

Perhaps one of the most frequent questions asked by newer members at Group meetings is "Should I tell my employer that I am an alcoholic?" Clearly the answer to this must rest with the individual, but it is likely to be influenced by whether or not the employer in question is enlightened on the subject of alcoholism.

Where an employee is reasonably confident that the employer is sympathetic towards the problem and has decided to disclose that they are alcoholic, it is suggested that they tell their employer that Alcoholics Anonymous would like to offer help to any fellow employee who may have a problem with alcohol.

Personal involvement

Because of the complexity of the circumstances which can arise when members find themselves becoming involved in this field, we should be aware of the dangers to our security and our sobriety unless we tread carefully. In some situations it may be appropriate to Twelfth Step a fellow employee, but it is usually better for an AA member to refer a problem drinker to another AA member outside the company. This can often be better within small companies where informal arrangements between management and AA members can lead to referral of those with a drinking problem, if they are willing, directly to the AA member.

Whether the contact takes place during working hours or not depends largely on how the request for help arose in the first instance but it generally better to undertake a Twelfth Step contact outside business hours, unless the introduction is made with the knowledge of management. Members should be aware that there is a possibility that management may judge them adversely if the problem drinker declines the help offered.

The employer should be told that Alcoholics Anonymous has no financial interest in recruiting members; that there are no dues or fees and that outside contributions must be declined. The sole concern of AA is the personal recovery and continued sobriety of those who turn to it for help with their drinking problems.

The Fellowship is committed to remaining forever non-professional, and the AA approach is essentially a simple one based on the unique ability of recovered alcoholics to work effectively with other problem drinkers. This approach is already being used productively in many company programmes to combat alcoholism.