

Chapter Four: AA and Employment

AA AND
EMPLOYMENT

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Section A of this Guidance is published to assist Employment Liaison Officers (ELOs) to carry AA's message to employers and also contains suggestions for AA groups in the workplace while Section B is published to help individual members who are employees.

4:1 Section A

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 & Continental Europe 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/Service Committees (see Chapter 1 on PI).

4:1.1 Employment Liaison Officers (ELOs)

The responsibility of ELOs is to carry AA's message to employers within their local area, supported by intergroup and region and a PI/Service Committee if one exists. Employment specifically concerns any organisation employing or serving staff companies, trade unions and associations, government departments and/or related agencies. An established period of sobriety (ideally not less than two years) and a good knowledge of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain & Continental Europe are necessary before accepting this role. Willingness to commit to not less than two years and not more than three years' service 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. The service term may depend on the individual conscience of the Intergroup.

4:1.2 Regional Employment Liaison Officers (RELOs)

The Regional Employment Liaison Officer (RELO) attends regional committee meetings and reports on ELO activity, chairs ELO committee meetings, supports new and existing ELOs and helps to coordinate regional employment activity.

4:1.3 Activities

Many employers see alcoholism as a very wasteful drain on resources and are often encouraged to find that AA does not cost them either time or money. They see the advantages of a sober worker who attends AA and will often display and make available AA literature.

Experience has shown that a business-like approach to employers is most likely to succeed. Often a phone call to ascertain the right person to contact is required, asking for the name and title of the person who deals with alcohol policies or employee welfare. This could be the Personnel Manager, Welfare Office, Occupational Health Nurse, Health and Safety Office, Company Doctor or Managing Director. An approach should then be made by telephone, e-mail or letter to that person, requesting a meeting and followed up by a written confirmation if requested. Intergroups and regions should supply properly headed paper for this purpose if needed.

4:1.4 Co-operation with employers and employee assistance programmes

Many employers have set up Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) to help employees whose drink problem affects their efficiency and well-being. Experience has shown that AA can help in the following ways:

- by making posters, literature, local contact numbers and details of local AA meetings available
- offering to talk to staff or management about the AA programme including showing appropriate presentations
- by making available the cumulative experience of over two million recovering alcoholics
- by explaining what AA is and how AA can help with the problem of alcoholism in the workplace
- by putting employers in direct contact with men and women who have achieved sobriety in AA and who are willing to share their personal experience freely with any problem drinker who seeks help

4:1.5 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 employers, 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 Alcohol Focus Scotland 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.

4:1.6 Large companies

In larger companies, which may have formal programmes for problem drinkers, one employee may be given the job of acting as a counsellor for alcoholic employees. They 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 and since this kind of work constitutes professional activity, it is therefore not Twelfth Step work.

4:1.7 AA groups

Tradition Six: 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.

Some companies that have formal programmes for problem drinkers may support the formation of an AA group. Experience suggests that an AA group is most successful when the non-alcoholics who have co-operated limit their "support" 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 that no strings are attached. AA groups within a company made up entirely of employees of that particular company can be helpful in introducing the AA programme to the problem drinker.

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

In businesses where there is no structured programme of help informal arrangements can be made for AA members to meet employees who have a drink problem and who may wish to stop. This is not professional counselling but simply an AA member carrying the message of recovery.

4:1.8 Trade Unions

Unions should be dealt with in similar ways to employers. However, our experience shows that before contacting local branch officers, an approach initially 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. Experience has shown that any ELO/PI/Service Committee organizing these events should ensure that literature and information provided addresses the professionals' attending and also carries the message to any potential AA members who may be present. Follow up from anyone attending the meeting should be expected and welcomed.

4:1.9 To summarise

Guided by our Traditions, the ELOs can act as a contact for employers within an intergroup, work as part of a PI/Service Committee and share information with other intergroup officers and the RELO, in order to 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 co-operate
- Provide presentations (online or face-to-face) to explain AA to employees
- Take employees with a drinking problem to AA meetings See section 5:4 for links to further online resources

4:2 Section B

4:2.1 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 is likely to be influenced by whether or not the employer in question is enlightened on the subject of alcoholism. Exercising prudence and seeking advice from a sponsor or other AA members with experience around this can be helpful.

4:2.2 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 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. 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.

4:3 Recommended literature available from GSO

- AA Service and Structure Handbooks for Great Britain & Continental Europe
- Speaking at non-AA meetings
- How AA members Co-operate with Professionals
- A Member's Eye View of AA
- AA as a Resource for Employers
- When Drink Stops Working
- A Message for Professionals
- A Brief Guide to AA
- Is AA for you?
- Who Me?
- For details of Confirmation of Attendance 'Chits' see Chapter 9.3.2 page 61 (Probation/Criminal Justice Services)

4:4 Online links



For online use the link for literature is <https://bit.ly/3vuHy6f>



Summary of resources available when working with Employers
<https://bit.ly/3uvvFvi>



Online information service for Employers:
<https://bit.ly/2SzsWnF>



Videos for Professionals
<https://bit.ly/2SFod3S>



Sample presentations given to Employers
<https://bit.ly/2RJWfDZ>

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