



## **X.Treatment and Accessibilities: Monday-Tuesday - EN**

General Service Conference - Conférence des Services généraux -  
Conferencia de Servicios Generales

2025-04-28 08:00 - 2025-04-29 12:00 EDT

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**2025 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities**

**Item A:** Review progress report on Military Outreach Project.

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**Background notes:**

*Excerpt from the November 3, 2024 trustees' CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee meeting report:*

The committee reviewed the staff's progress report on the military outreach project and **agreed to forward** the report to the 2025 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities. The committee looks forward to a progress report at the February 2025 meeting.

The committee received an update from the subcommittee and discussed the next steps for veteran outreach.

*Excerpt from the July 28, 2024 trustees' CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee meeting report:*

The chair appointed Morgan B. (chair), Gerry C., Tom P., Dawn Klug (Class A trustee), and Teddy B.W. as members of the Military Outreach Project subcommittee.

The committee provided the Staff secretary with suggestions to continue the Military Outreach project including expanding the project to interviews with veterans and looks forward to a progress report from the subcommittee at the November 2024 meeting.

*Committee Consideration of the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:*

The committee reviewed and accepted the progress report on the Military Outreach Project noting the importance of adding interviews with A.A. members who are veterans. The committee forwarded to the trustees' Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee the following suggestions:

- Focus on creating a landing page for the military audio interviews on General Service Office's website aa.org.
- Prioritize an interview with a Canadian Francophone A.A. member in the military.

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- Include the military audio interviews on A.A.'s YouTube page using a simple image.

The committee requested that a progress report on the Military Outreach Project be brought back to the 2025 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

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*Secretary's note:* The current iteration of the Military Outreach project (the military audio interviews) began in 2021 and has been guided by the Advisory Action of the 2023 General Service Conference, requesting *"The 22 interviews recorded to date as part of the Military Audio project be approved, giving the General Service Office (GSO) the latitude to distribute the audio interviews in various formats and on various platforms, and that an update report be provided to the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities."*

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### **Background:**

1. Progress report on the Military Outreach project

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## Progress report Military Outreach project

Since the 2024 General Service Conference, the following progress has been made on the Military Outreach Project:

- Posting Military Members in A.A. to landing page on aa.org: <https://www.aa.org/military-members-in-aa>
- Adding Military Audio Interviews to YouTube playlist: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6Ke-nL58u6kCSr6e1ljV-dd7\\_YhSoKaT](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6Ke-nL58u6kCSr6e1ljV-dd7_YhSoKaT)
- Interview with a Canadian Francophone member — The Military Outreach Project subcommittee connected with trustee at-large/Canada, [REDACTED], who put the call out for French-speaking military members. Recording will be scheduled after a member is identified.
- Expanding the project to include military veterans:

The following parameters were identified for the candidates of veteran audio interviews:

- Completed military training to initial qualification and employment
- Experience in the military played a part in their problems with drinking (during active duty and/or later in life)
- Recovery continues to this point within the context of A.A.'s suggested program of recovery.

The staff secretary will coordinate with the ACMs and the Public Information desk to plan recording time for interviews of military veterans in summer of 2025 and at the 2025 International Convention.

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**2025 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities**

**ITEM B:** Review progress report on shared experience from Fellowship on outreach efforts to A.A. members in the military.

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**Background notes:**

*Committee Consideration from the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:*

The committee requested that the Staff on the Accessibilities desk solicit current shared experience from the Fellowship on outreach efforts to Veteran Affairs (VA) and active military in the U.S. and Canada to be utilized in service material. The committee looks forward to a progress report at the 2025 General Service Conference.

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**Background:**

1. Shared Experience from the Fellowship on Outreach to Military
2. GSO UK A.A. Veterans Flyer

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TREATMENT/  
ACCESSIBILITIES  
Item B  
Doc. 1

### ***Shared Experience from the Fellowship on Outreach to Military***

Secretary's Note: The Accessibilities desk requested shared experience from the Fellowship on outreach efforts to veterans and active military in the U.S. and Canada in a September 2024 activity update. Due to lack of responses, the Staff researched area websites, past correspondence and international GSO websites to gather background on how committees are currently reaching out to military for discussion.

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#### **Initial Outreach Efforts:**

- *Find out if your area has meetings on any military bases.*
- *Find where the addiction treatment centers are located on military institutions and contact head medical personal to find out what their aftercare requirements are and if they include going to A.A. meetings.*

#### **From past A.A. Guidelines Armed Services (1968-1993):**

- *Find an off-base group for military members to attend nearby. This can be helpful for newcomers to mingle with alcoholics of every type and not feel "special."*

*To quote directly from a group that holds meetings off base:*

*"The present arrangement is civilian accommodation close to the base (but out of military jurisdiction) where civilians and service people get the benefit jointly of variety in thinking, continuity of A.A. therapy, a place away from the service atmosphere to relax, and the opportunity of meeting people who provide a special outlet locally. Since most service canteens, clubs and messes are 'wet', this is a distinct advantage in getting away from the alcoholic atmosphere."*

- *Stress the absence of rank consideration. One meeting has a sign that says "Abandon rank, all ye who enter here." Some suggestions are first name only, attending meetings in civilian clothes, and support of informal mingling before/after meeting. If this is not possible, you can have a meeting for officers and one for enlisted persons.*
- *Place notices of meetings nearby in base newsletters.*

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- *Thorough communication with a CPC committee to medical officers or chaplains are of utmost importance, as this is where most people will learn about A.A. and meetings.*

### **Local Outreach Examples:**

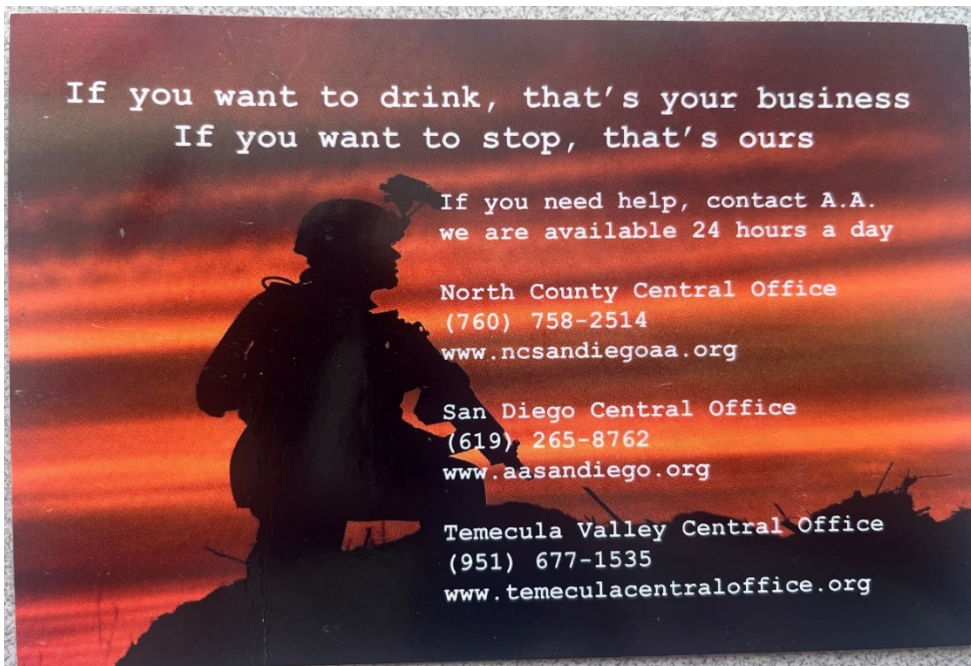
*Portland Area Intergroup Veterans Outreach Committee ([link](#)):*

*The Veterans Outreach Committee is veterans reaching out to veterans to carry the A.A. message of hope and recovery. We are concentrating our efforts at Veterans Administration facilities; most of our presence currently is literature on display at table boards or racks. Our goal is to be in every VA facility in the Portland Metro and Vancouver area and help facilitate veterans to get a start in the A.A. program.*

*Currently we serve in-person at 2 facilities, each once a month. This is when we introduce a potential alcoholic to the meeting schedule and the Meeting Guide app. We answer any questions they may have and ensure that they have a way of contacting us directly or through the Portland Intergroup.*

*VA regulations have changed and a less stringent clearance is needed. Ward 5C has opened its doors to us. This is a lock down facility and only veterans are allowed in and only with an escort. A volunteer clearance is required to attend. Clearance forms are available through [AmericanVeteranAA@gmail.com](mailto:AmericanVeteranAA@gmail.com).*

*Outreach in San Diego Area, Front of postcard:*



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Back of postcard:

Scan the appropriate code to take you to the Meeting Guide App

You may also visit the Alcoholics Anonymous website <aa.org> and click "Find A.A. Near You" for local meetings and services



Meeting Guide    Android    Apple

**A.A. Meetings on Camp Pendleton**

<b>MONDAY</b>	Building 210568 PFC Krause Training Facility 1830 - 1930 At 3rd AA BN School on Camp Del Mar area (by the boat basin)
<b>TUESDAY</b>	Building 53311 53 Area Chapel 1800 - 1900 At the intersection of 3rd Street and B Street in Camp Horno
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	Building 2220 CNATT in 22 Area (across from MCAS) 1130 - 1230 In the 1st Floor Auditorium of the MARDET building on 10th Street
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	Building 16105 S.A.C.C. (Prevention Building) 1830 - 1930 (Up the hill on 11th St. from the main S.A.C.C. building 16105 follow the signs to 11th & A St.)
<b>THURSDAY</b>	Building H200T (S.A.R.P) 1430 - 1530 Behind Thrift Shop - (near the Wounded Warrior BN and Lake O'Neal - on the Old Hospital grounds)
<b>FRIDAY</b>	Building 62440 - 62 Area Chapel 1130 - 1230 At 7th Street and E Street in San Mateo area

Flyer from GSO Great Britain (next doc)

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## A question to veterans —and their families ... ... from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

### *Is drinking costing you more than money?*

Alcoholism is not determined by where, how long, how much, or what you drink.  
A good test lies in the answer to this question: what has drinking done to you?

Has your drinking affected your relationships  
with your family, friends, or former or present employer?  
Has your drinking affected your health?  
Has your drinking affected your state of mind?  
Have you become preoccupied with drinking?

If so, you are not alone: AA helps millions of people, **including veterans, and their families.**

Any kind of man or woman can be a member of AA—alcoholism can strike a person of any rank, any age, any ethnicity, any social, religious, or educational background, or any field of skill.

The blackouts and the shakes, the loneliness, and the fears are the same for a private, a corporal, a sergeant, a captain, a major, a reservist, a veteran, or members of their families.

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#### What is AA?

*Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.*

*The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.*

*AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.*

All meetings are completely confidential, and personal anonymity is assured.

#### How can I contact AA?

- (1) Call 0800 9177 650 (free; hours vary)
- (2) Email [help@aamail.org](mailto:help@aamail.org)
- (3) Go to <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/About-AA/Newcomers/Get-help-now> and click on the yellow 'Alcoholics Anonymous Chat' box. If you are using the mobile version of the website, click on the 'hamburger signs' on the top right (≡), click newcomers, and the chat option will appear.

If you call, email, or chat, you will be able to talk in confidence not to a professional but to another alcoholic who has found a solution in AA. AA helplines typically offer a 'twelfth-step call'. This is where an AA member or two can arrange to meet you to take you to your first AA meeting. AA can also arrange for this person to be an AA member with armed services experience. If you would like this, ask if there is someone available from the 'armed services twelfth-stepper list'.

Some people may prefer to discreetly attend an open AA meeting ('open' meaning *open to visitors*). If you would like to 'check out' AA by attending a meeting and seeing what it is all about, you can go to <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/> and use the 'Find a Meeting' function (on the top right of the screen). Type in the town, district, or postcode you are in, and a map will show you the details of local meetings. This information is available also from the above helplines.

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### 2025 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities

**ITEM C:** Review progress report on the Accessibilities Resources flyer made available on aa.org.

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#### Background notes:

*From the November 3, 2024 meeting of the trustees' CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:*

The committee accepted the updated flyer of Accessibilities Resources published on aa.org and **agreed to forward** to the 2025 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

*From the July 28, 2024 meeting of the trustees' CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:*

The committee reviewed the Accessibilities inventory revised by the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities and requested that Staff secretary (1) run an accessibility check on the inventory and (2) make the inventory available to the Fellowship and professionals. The committee looks forward to a progress report on making this resource available to the Fellowship at the November 2024 meeting.

*Committee Consideration from the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:*

The committee reviewed the accessibilities inventory provided by the trustees' CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities committee and suggested minor edits. The committee asked that the staff coordinator on the Accessibilities desk make the list available to download from the Accessibilities Committee's page on aa.org and share the link with the staff coordinator on the Cooperation with the Professional Community desk for potential distribution among professionals and inclusion on the A.A. LinkedIn page. The committee also asked the staff coordinator on the Accessibilities desk to share the list periodically in activity updates.

The committee requested that a progress report be brought back to the 2025 committee on how useful this list has been to local accessibilities committees.

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### *Committee Consideration from the 2023 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:*

The committee discussed the suggestion that an Accessibility Inventory be conducted throughout A.A.'s services and structure and suggested that the trustees' CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee take an inventory of what resources are currently available from the General Service Office and the AA Grapevine to meet accessibility related challenges and consider the best methods for communicating about those resources to the Fellowship.

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Secretary's Note: The Accessibilities Resources flyer was added to aa.org in English, French and Spanish. This was communicated to the Fellowship through an activity update in September 2024; and announced on LinkedIn in October 2024.

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### **Background:**

1. Accessibilities Resources Flyer on aa.org ([link](#))
2. Accessibilities Resources Flyer on LinkedIn ([link](#))

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### **2025 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities**

**ITEM D:** Review progress report on the update of service material with shared experience from neurodivergent alcoholics.

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#### **Background Notes:**

*Excerpt from the November 3, 2024 trustees' CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee meeting report:*

The committee reviewed the flyer "Making the A.A. Message Accessible" (F-107) and agreed to provide any further suggestions to the staff secretary. The committee looks forward to an updated flyer at the 2025 February meeting.

*Excerpt from the July 28, 2024 trustees' CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee meeting report:*

The committee reviewed the progress report on collected shared experience from neurodivergent alcoholics and requested the staff secretary update the flyer "Serving All Alcoholics — Making the A.A. Message Accessible (F-107)" with highlights from the shared experience. The committee looks forward to an updated service piece or progress report at the November 2024 meeting. The committee noted that the sharing from neurodivergent alcoholics could be helpful in the development of the pamphlet on Mental Health Professionals.

*Committee Consideration from the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:*

The committee reviewed the progress report on updating A.A. service material to better carry the message to alcoholics with intellectual or information-processing challenges, communication challenges and diverse neurological abilities and noted that much of the service material is not relevant to the subject. The committee asked the staff coordinator on the Accessibilities desk to follow up on the 2023 General Service Conference considerations related to the revisions to the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship" and the publication of an issue of AA Grapevine magazine with stories from neurodiverse alcoholics.

The committee forwarded a list of service material that could be updated to the trustees' CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee.

The committee looks forward to a progress report to be brought back to the 2025 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities with shared experience from

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the Fellowship on neurodivergence and alcoholism to inform service material updates.

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Secretary's Note: An issue of the AA Grapevine magazine highlighting stories from neurodivergent alcoholics was published in November 2024. Also, on a parallel track, a subcommittee of the trustee's Literature committee is currently working on updating the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship" with the shared experience from neurodivergent members.

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### Background:

1. Draft of "Making the A.A. Message Accessible (F-107)"\* with addition of sharing from neurodivergent alcoholics

*\*This title was recently renamed from the former "Serving All Alcoholics — Making the A.A. Message Accessible."*

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## Making the A.A. Message Accessible

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The AAWS AA Grapevine literature catalog has a separate section for Accessibilities materials. You can order this catalog from GSO at Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; 212-870-3400; [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org). Resources are also available from local and area Accessibilities Committees.

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[www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org).





**W**hile there are no special alcoholics, there are alcoholics who experience barriers to accessing the A.A. message. For some, a six-inch step can be an insurmountable obstacle. A locked access door, blocked ramp or parking problem can make it impossible to get to a meeting. Some members are ill, homebound or living in retirement or convalescent homes; others are Deaf or blind; have hearing or vision loss, learning, reading or information-processing challenges; and still others are elderly, use wheelchairs or canes, or have other mobility concerns. Literature may be hard to understand especially for those who experience reading difficulties or who are trying to access the A.A. message in a second language. Childcare issues may make it impossible to attend regular meetings. Remote geography or cultural differences may hinder contact with other members.

A local intergroup/central office can often provide information about the accessibility of meetings, and whether organized Accessibility efforts exist in particular areas. This information is often included in local meeting lists and events flyers. When preparing these listings, it can be helpful to use appropriate symbols and to include a name and number to contact for additional accessibility-related information.

If we can do a better job of reaching out to alcoholics who face access barriers in receiving the A.A. message, we help them to carry the message to other alcoholics they may already know or will come into contact with, providing a powerful example that it's possible to achieve sobriety despite perceived barriers.

#### **Available for Accessibilities Committees:**

- Accessibilities Kit — a three-ring binder with material to help A.A. members and committees carry A.A.'s message of recovery to those with accessibility challenges. See complete kit contents on [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org).
- Accessibilities Workbook — A resource information on forming Accessibilities Committees, presentations to professionals and working with American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters.
- Accessibilities checklist (SMF-208)
- A.A. Guidelines on Accessibility for All Alcoholics (MG-16).

## **THE ALCOHOLIC WHO IS DEAF OR HARD-OF-HEARING**

"I wonder in meetings if people are saying out loud what appears on their faces," writes one A.A. member who is Deaf. "Are they expressing the sadness or anger I sense in their bodies or behind their eyes? Is this real or in my mind? I wish I could hear this meeting with all its noise, all the feelings! What's the laughter about? Who's speaking now? How are the newcomers doing?"

An A.A. who signs for his home group worries about the communication gap: "When hearing alcoholics join A.A., we listen to the message of sobriety over and over, and ultimately it can penetrate our fog. But most Deaf alcoholics in the Fellowship are denied the benefits of repetition."

The challenge of serving the alcoholic who is Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing goes beyond that of simple "hearing." For Deaf people who use ASL, for example, English is a second language. Idioms and colloquialisms are difficult to sign, and some phrases used in A.A. — such as "Rarely have we seen a person fail" — do not have comparable signs. ASL is a complete language, with its own unique grammar and sentence structure, and, likewise, the Deaf community is a unique culture, with unique customs, norms, and regional variations. So, working with the Deaf community can be similar to working with any group that has a separate language and culture.

A growing number of groups are providing signers to interpret for their members who are Deaf. Additionally, interpreters allow Deaf and hearing members to *share* experience, strength and hope with each other, as communication with the Deaf is not a one-way street. Most groups will agree to having a non-A.A. interpreter attend its closed meetings in such cases, recognizing that professional interpreters adhere to a strict code of ethics that assures the confidentiality of the A.A. meeting.

Accessibilities Committees, central offices and intergroups often maintain lists of qualified interpreters available for hire who are willing and able to sign for A.A. meetings and events. Providing a signer takes money, and if the group cannot afford the cost, there are other sources of help. Some local intergroup/central offices have provided resources in their annual budgets for helping groups hire interpreters, and some area committees have set up special funds. Some agencies provide interpreters for people who are Deaf, or the alcoholic may bring his or her own interpreter to a meeting.

It is important, however, not to let fears about money become the focus. Our primary purpose is to carry the

message and, as the A.A. Responsibility Declaration indicates, "When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there." And for that, each one of us is responsible.

One area's Accessibilities Committee offers the following suggestions for groups interested in starting an interpreted meeting — as either a brand new meeting or part of an established group: (1) *Determine the need.* Do some research to find out if there are any interpreted meetings available in your neighborhood, and whether there is a need for such a meeting at the time or times that your group meets. (2) *If there is, make a commitment.* Is the group willing to pay for an interpreter week in and week out, even if sometimes no Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing people show up? Remember that the meeting will be listed in the meeting book as interpreted. (3) *Designate a group member* to coordinate all the work related to an interpreted meeting, and if you plan to provide interpreter services at specific meetings and events, be sure to include that information on all flyers, published meeting lists and websites. (4) *Reach out to the Deaf community in your area.* Make up flyers; give them out at other interpreted meetings, and send them to local professionals who work with Deaf alcoholics. Notify your local intergroup/central office and Accessibilities Committees, in writing. (5) *Be patient.* It takes time to get a signed group going. And be aware that not all Hard-of-Hearing people want to identify themselves as such, and they may be sitting somewhere other than in the designated area. It may be helpful for A.A. members in your community to learn about A.A. meetings in ASL run by and for Deaf members on virtual platforms. One source for information about these is the Online Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous ([www.aa-intergroup.org](http://www.aa-intergroup.org)). Another resource to find ASL meetings is [www.deafaa.org](http://www.deafaa.org). Local Deaf Access Committees have useful information about resources for A.A. members who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Hard-of-Hearing. Contact the Accessibility Desk at GSO for more information: [access@aa.org](mailto:access@aa.org).

Some A.A. members learn some sign language in order to communicate with Deaf members. Even learning enough to greet Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing newcomers and encourage them to keep coming back can make a difference. Of course, like any other language, there is a vast difference between one who may have reached a basic level of proficiency and one who is a professionally trained interpreter. Nevertheless, A.A.s should not let a lack of ASL skills prevent them from reaching out to Deaf

alcoholics. Pen and paper, as well as text messaging, are excellent tools for starting up a conversation.

Visual communication is important, and a wave of the hand or a tap on the shoulder can signal that you want the person's attention. Meeting facilities that provide microphones often provide assistive listening devices (ALDs) as part of their audio service. ALDs are used to improve hearing ability for people when they are unable to distinguish speech in ambient noise within a variety of meeting environments. Often in a noisy or crowded room it is almost impossible for an individual who is Hard-of-Hearing to distinguish one voice among many. ALDs are devices that help a person to hear and understand what is being said more clearly or to express thoughts more easily and can help Hard-of-Hearing members participate in the meeting. Several types of ALDs are available to improve sound transmission for people with hearing loss. Some are designed for large facilities such as classrooms, theaters, places of worship, and airports. Other types are intended for personal use in small settings and for one-on-one conversations; all can be used with or without hearing aids or a cochlear implant.

It is important also to invite Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing members to participate in every aspect of service within the group or at an A.A. event. Communication works both ways, and groups can ask Deaf members if they would like to give A.A. talks, with the interpreter switching gears and translating for the benefit of hearing members.

**Resources available:** The Big Book and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* in ASL are available for free online ([aa.org](http://aa.org) and GSO's YouTube channel) and for purchase in DVD formats. The pamphlet "Access to A.A." is also available in ASL on DVD and online at [aa.org](http://aa.org). The AA Grapevine YouTube channel has a playlist of Deaf alcoholic stories at [www.youtube.com/@AAGrapevine](http://www.youtube.com/@AAGrapevine). In addition to the online meetings mentioned above, some A.A.s who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing participate in the *Loners-Internationalists Meeting (LIM)*. The Accessibilities Coordinator at GSO can also provide an Accessibilities Checklist to help groups assess their own levels of accessibility.

## ALCOHOLICS WHO ARE BLIND OR WHO HAVE VISION LOSS

Simply getting to a meeting can be the biggest problem for the alcoholic who is blind or whose eyesight is compromised. Intergroup/central offices and Accessibilities Committees often maintain lists of members who are

willing to provide transportation to and from meetings and other A.A. functions. Some groups have asked their local intergroup/central offices to identify such members on Twelfth Step lists.

The members who are blind or have low vision may ask for assistance in orienting to the surrounding of the A.A. meeting room.

One group's experience illustrates what can be done to help any alcoholic not only get to meetings regularly but also to become a full participant in the group. The chairperson asked for volunteers to take a young blind man to meetings once a month; the volunteers were assigned specific dates, and if they couldn't take their turn, they were responsible for finding a substitute. The response was immediate and generous, and the young man is now able to attend all group meetings and participate fully in group activities.

Other A.A. members who are blind find that online meetings provide the opportunity to both participate in their own recovery and to carry the message to others.

**Resources available:** GSO has a list of A.A. books and pamphlets available in braille and large-print editions, as well as on audio formats: online, as audio-books, cassettes, and CDs. Audio versions of the Big Book and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions may be accessed free of charge on aa.org. Braille material, audiobooks, cassettes and CDs can be purchased online www.aa.org or by contacting GSO directly at 212-870-3312. AA Grapevine and La Viña produces weekly podcast and makes audio of most magazine features available on the website. www.aagrapevine.org and www.aalavina.org.

### THE ALCOHOLIC WHO IS NEURODIVERGENT:

Neurodivergence is a term that describes people whose brains process information differently than most people. Neurodivergent people may have different strengths and challenges than people whose brains develop more typically. The term "neurodivergence" can include those with Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, OCD, Down Syndrome and Tourette syndrome to name a few.

#### One neurodivergent member shares:

"Even though ADHD is considered a disorder by medical professionals at this time, a lot of neurodivergent people, including myself, don't like the use of that word when it applies to brain differences from birth. *My brain is different, but it's not broken.* I need professional help and medication so I can navigate in a world built on the social norms and expectations of neurotypical brains.

The analogy I like in this case is that I am 5'0" tall. I need a step stool to reach most things in my cabinets or to close the blinds at work. My height is not a disorder. It's not something I can change with diet or exercise — it's just the way I was built, how my genes expressed themselves. That step stool is a tool so I can cook in a kitchen that was built for the average westerner."

Some A.A. members who are neurodivergent shared their experience strength and hope with us, including these suggestions for meetings and sponsorship (noting that solutions that work for some members will not work for everyone):

#### Suggestions for Meetings:

- There is safety/comfort in the structure of a meeting — i.e. sticking to script, banners and slogans, starting and ending on time, time-keeping shares. One member shared the slogans were extremely helpful in keeping the program accessible with simple wording.
- Space between chairs and rows for fidgeting/movement. (sometimes called "stimming"). —Allow hand-crafts or hand-fidget activities.
- Statement about the need for some members to move freely (explicit statement in the script).
- Take a break halfway through meeting.
- Visible clocks can be helpful for setting "guideposts".
- Online meetings are essential as in-person meetings can be really taxing on some neurodivergent individuals due to "masking". Allowing a member's video to be off can help with this too. Masking takes up a lot of energy both in-person and online.

#### One neurodivergent member shares:

"I have to spend so much energy that I don't have masking my autism on camera and pretending at great personal cost to myself to be neurotypical by not stimming, wearing uncomfortable clothing, having the right facial expressions, posture, focus (some of the things that make in person meetings difficult in the first place) ...it is much more effective for me pay attention and not burn out if I can keep my camera off."

- Allow for shares to be prepared in advance.
- **For online meetings** — Making sure documents/literature online can be used with screen readers.
- **For in-person meetings**— Provide some of the discussed literature in large print or allow members to follow along with the audio version of the literature in headphones.

### Suggestions for Sponsorship:

- Be open to text communication instead of strictly phone calls or face to face meetings.
- Allow people to be responsible for their own program and set their own boundaries — the “always say yes to service and fellowship” mentality can be damaging to health and ostracize people with neurodivergence. The ability to say no is important.
- Consider working step four together with your sponsee. Sometimes it helps to have someone there while writing or work is being done (some call this “body doubling”).
- Provide sponsees with options like video or audio resources (podcasts, speaker recordings, audio versions of A.A. literature).
- It might be helpful to have an emergency contact, in the case of mental health emergency.
- Many neurodivergent people take things very literally. It might be helpful to make things more explicit i.e. make it a point to explain the “God of your own understanding” concept when the word God is used throughout the book.

**\*Stimming** — Stimming, or self-stimulatory behavior, is a coping mechanism that people with autism use to manage their emotions, sensory experiences, and overwhelming situations. It can include repetitive body movements, noises, or use of objects.

**\*\*Masking** — a strategy that some people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) use to appear non-autistic and blend in with their peers. It can involve consciously or unconsciously hiding or suppressing autistic characteristics and imitating neurotypical behaviors.

### A.A.S WITH PHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS OR WHO ARE HOMEBOUND

Some A.A.s with physical constraints can get to meetings; others cannot. Many who have difficulty walking or who use wheelchairs use public transportation to get to meetings. Other members with mobility problems rely on fellow members to drive them to and from meetings. A.A. members wishing to make their meeting spaces accessible have installed wheelchair ramps over steps to the meeting room, and arranged seating to create ample space for wheelchairs or walkers. Members have checked that nearby parking is available and verified that rest rooms are truly accessible, with ample room to maneuver within the confines of the room or stall. Many

local meeting lists are coded to indicate meetings that are held in wheelchair accessible facilities.

Taking a meeting to an ill, homebound member can make a tremendous difference to them. The experience of one area’s Accessibilities Committee tells the story well: “In the front of the meeting schedules, we enclose a notice headed, We Are Not Alone Anymore group: ‘This group is for homebound members. We would like to bring a meeting to you. While there are no special alcoholics, there are alcoholics who experience access barriers to receiving the A.A. message. The We Are Not Alone Anymore group believes that when anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, the hand of A.A. will be there.’ We list our phone number and encourage homebound members to call for help. We also ask A.A.s who are not living with disabilities to volunteer their services.”

Another area set up a “mobile group.” The chair reported: “Volunteers will carry a regular meeting to members housebound for lengthy periods of time.”

Resources available: Many homebound A.A.s participate in the Loners-Internationalists Meeting (LIM) as “Homers Many online meetings are available. One source for information about these is the Online Intergroup of A.A., [www.aa-intergroup.org](http://www.aa-intergroup.org).

### OLDER ALCOHOLICS

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

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.

Many A.A. members reach out to older alcoholics within their group, including those who need assistance getting to the meeting and participating in the meeting, as well as those who become homebound. Some groups also start Seniors in Sobriety (SIS) meetings, or designate certain meetings as Senior Friendly (SF). Many groups note with gratitude their appreciation for the older alcoholics. Many have long-term sobriety and can serve as valuable resources for the group — as sponsors and keepers of A.A. tradition and experience.

“When we started,” says the chair of an Accessibilities Committee that set up a phone service, “we were told, ‘If you raise expectations, be sure you deliver.’ That’s some-

thing I keep in mind always. Most of our callers are older people, and they look forward to seeing us. Often a live meeting at home gives them a new lease on life, even if temporarily. Our oldtimers are as important at home as at meetings, and we're not going to let them disappear. We're just giving back to them some of what they've given to us."

The A.A. message can also be carried to professionals at social service agencies assisting elders, as well as elder care facilities, including retirement, assisted living and skilled nursing communities.

**Resources available:** Many elder A.A.s participate in online meetings. One source for information about these is the Online Intergroup of A.A., [www.aa-intergroup.org](http://www.aa-intergroup.org). Additionally, there are some A.A. publications available through GSO that focus on the experience of elder alcoholics, including: "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic — Never Too Late" and "Do You Think You're Different?"

## PARENTS AND 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 caregiving responsibilities, such as taking care of a sick parent or family member.

Many groups work with the local intergroup/central office to develop a list of meetings where kids are welcome or childcare is available. It can also be helpful to develop a list of A.A. members willing to participate in online/phone meetings with parents/caregivers who cannot attend meetings in person. Directing single parents or other caregivers to information about online meetings also creates opportunities for participation and A.A. sharing that is so beneficial to all members.

**Resources available:** One source for information about these is the Online Intergroup of A.A., [www.aa-intergroup.org](http://www.aa-intergroup.org).

## UNDERSERVED AND 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 one that is right around the corner. We hope that all suffering alcoholics will be afforded the opportunity to receive the

A.A. message and to participate in the A.A. program of recovery.

In some Areas, Remote Communities Committees have been established to carry the message to members and potential members who are not being served. Contact the Accessibility Desk to find out more: [access@aa.org](mailto:access@aa.org).

**Resources available:** Additional A.A. publications available through GSO that you may find helpful include: "A.A. Guidelines for Remote Communities," "LGBTQ Alcoholics in A.A.," "Black in A.A. — Experience, Strength and Hope," "Hispanic Women in A.A." "Many Paths to Spirituality," "Behind the Walls: A Message of Hope," "A.A. for the Native North American" and "Women in A.A." Additionally, a GSO staff member can provide shared experience on working with remote communities.

## EASY-TO-READ LITERATURE

Members with Difficulty reading, illiteracy and limited reading abilities can be less visible than other accessibility challenges. The group's literature chair can make a point of announcing that many books, pamphlets and Grapevine articles are available in audio format. Many groups read aloud, a practice which can help all new members learn the steps and traditions.. Help with reading and comprehension can also be offered one on one through sponsors or other group members.

**Resources available:** There are audio- and video-cassettes available through GSO. In addition, several pieces of illustrated, easy-to-read literature can be ordered from GSO. Grapevine carries a large inventory of e-books and CDs containing the shared experience, strength and hope of individual members.

**2025 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities**

**ITEM E:** Review revision of the Conference-approved flyer “Where do I go from here?” (F-4).

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**Background notes:**

*Excerpt from the November 3, 2024 trustees’ CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee meeting report:*

The committee reviewed a draft of the revised flyer “Where do I go from here?” (F-4) and considered the two proposed designs. The committee approved the design with darker font and **agreed to forward** to the 2025 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

*Excerpt from the July 28, 2024 trustees’ CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee meeting report:*

The committee reviewed a draft of the revised flyer “Where do I go from here?” (F-4) and provided the Staff secretary with a list of suggestions. The committee looks forward to a draft flyer or progress report at the November 2024 meeting.

*Advisory Action from the 2024 General Service Conference:*

The flyer “Where do I go from here?” (F-4) be updated with current inclusive language and information on how to find A.A. both in person and online. The committee requested that a progress report or draft flyer be brought back to the 2025 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

*Excerpt from the October 29, 2023 trustees’ CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee meeting report:*

The committee reviewed the flyer “Where do I go from here?” as part of their regular review of material under the purview of Treatment and Accessibilities. The committee agreed to forward to the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities the flyer for discussion on its’ effectiveness and relevance.

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**Background:**

1. "Where do I go from here?" (F-4) Draft Revision\*
2. "Where do I go from here?" (F-4) [Current Version](#) (aa.org)

\*For members of this Conference committee only and are not available for duplication or distribution beyond the committee.

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**2025 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities**

**ITEM F:** Review contents and format of Treatment Kit and Workbook.

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**Background Notes:**

*Committee Consideration from the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:*

The committee reviewed the Treatment Kit and Workbook and forwarded to the trustees' CPC/TA Committee a list of minor edits to the workbook to be implemented at the next printing.

Kits and workbooks for CPC, Corrections, Public Information, Treatment and Accessibilities are reviewed by the appropriate trustees' Committees during each working annual period.

Workbooks and kits are service pieces. Any suggested changes to their content by the Conference committee are put forth as suggestions rather than recommendations.

Between Conferences, ideas for changes to a workbook or to the contents of a kit may be received. These may be reviewed by the appropriate trustees' Committee and implemented, or the trustees' Committee may choose to forward an idea to the Conference Committee for review.

Typically, service kits are updated annually each fall.

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Secretary's Note: Changes to the Treatment Kit suggested by a Committee Consideration from the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities have been made.

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**Background:**

1. Treatment [Digital Kit List](#) with Conference updates (aa.org)
2. Current Treatment [Workbook](#) (aa.org)
3. Physical Treatment Kit (in-person)

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## 2025 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities

**ITEM G:** Review contents and format of Accessibilities Kit and Workbook.

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### Background Notes:

*Committee Consideration from the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:*

The committee reviewed the Accessibilities Kit and Workbook and forwarded to the trustee's CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee a list of pamphlets/resources to be added to the kit.

Kits and workbooks for CPC, Corrections, Public Information, Treatment and Accessibilities are reviewed by the appropriate trustees' Committees during each working annual period.

Workbooks and kits are service pieces. Any suggested changes to their content by the Conference committee are put forth as suggestions rather than recommendations.

Between Conferences, ideas for changes to a workbook or to the contents of a kit may be received. These may be reviewed by the appropriate trustees' Committee and implemented, or the trustees' Committee may choose to forward an idea to the Conference Committee for review.

Typically, service kits are updated annually each fall.

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Secretary's Note: Changes to the Accessibilities Kit suggested by a Committee Consideration from the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities have been made. Staff secretary is proposing the following changes for next print:

- San Serif font
- Mention of the "All Accessibilities Committee" monthly meeting under "Working with Other Accessibilities Committees"
- Addition of sections on online meetings and where to find A.A. literature in other languages under "Remote Communities" section

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**Background:**

1. Accessibilities [Digital Kit List](#) with Conference updates (aa.org)
2. Current [Accessibilities Workbook](#) (aa.org)
3. Physical Accessibilities Kit (in-person)

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**2025 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities**

**ITEM H:** Review resource lists for Remote Communities and Cooperation with Elder Community.

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**Background Notes:**

*Committee Consideration from the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:*

The committee reviewed the Remote Communities and Cooperation with Elder Community resource lists and forwarded several suggestions to be added to the lists to the trustees' CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee.

*Excerpt from the October 29, 2023 trustees' CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee meeting report:*

The committee reviewed the Remote Communities and Elder Community resource lists and agreed to forward to the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities for their review.

While kits for Treatment and Accessibilities have been reviewed annually by both the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities and trustees' CPC-TA, the resource lists have not been on the same review schedule.

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Secretary's Note: Changes to the Remote Communities resource suggested by a Committee Consideration from the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities have been noted.

For the Elder Community resource list, the accessibilities coordinator added the Area 17 CEC workbook as a possible resource. There were no further suggestions from the Conference Committee.

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**Background:**

1. [Remote Communities Resource List](#) with 2024 Conference Edits (aa.org)
2. [Cooperation with the Elder Community Resource List](#) (aa.org)

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