Al-Anon Guidelines

Al-Anon Service Arm Websites

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The internet can be a way for Al-Anon Family Groups' service arms to reach potential newcomers, professionals, and the general public. Given the potential worldwide reach, it is imperative to consider the impact on Al-Anon as a whole, by adhering to Al-Anon principles when creating content for your website.

The World Service Office (WSO) manages al-anon.org, which is designed with a broad approach for national and international appeal to members, newcomers, professionals, and the general public. Al-Anon service arms—Districts, Areas, and Al-Anon Information Services (AIS)—may create websites to meet the specific needs of local members and potential newcomers.

Planning A Website

Experience has shown the best results are achieved when a committee or work group works together in planning, creating, and managing a website. The website work group can be an existing board of the service arm, another service committee, or it can be a new work group specifically formed for this project. Having team members who are knowledgeable in current web technology is helpful. It may be necessary to establish a line of communication with the Area Web Coordinator and other service arm websites to determine the best way for these websites to complement one another.

Your Website Audience

Given the worldwide nature of the internet and the various types of people who could find and visit your website, it is important to ensure content is relevant and meets the need of your audiences, which may include:

- Potential newcomers looking to learn more about Al-Anon and how to find a meeting.
- Members or groups who may be looking for District, AISs or Area information, literature, resources, or local events.
- Professionals who may be seeking information for their client or patient.
- Members of the local media who may be interested in Al-Anon information.
- Service arms looking for other Area or group resources.

Website Content Strategy

The information on your website should be pertinent to your service arm and should be understandable by anyone who reads it—regardless of their understanding of Al-Anon principles. With the potential newcomer being the primary audience for this content, it is suggested to limit the use of Al-Anon terminology so that content conveys the proper meaning to the reader. Develop a regular process for updating website content. Ensure that meeting information is as accurate as possible. Content may include any of the following:

- A warm localized welcome.
- Service arm websites are encouraged to link to the meeting search on al-anon.org (https://al-anon.org/al-anon-meetings/) to ensure the most current information. Groups information on al-anon.org is automatically updated in real-time as group record changes are entered into the WSO database.
- Local meeting information, if linking to al-anon.org does not address unique local details, such as temporary closures. (Consider organizing your meeting list by cities rather than Districts.)
- Website navigation is important so users can quickly and easily find the content most likely to fit their needs.
- Newcomer-friendly terms (avoid using acronyms or Al-Anon terminology i.e., Districts, intergroup, and closed meeting). If there are no alternatives to the Al-Anon terminology, consider adding details to define the meaning of the word(s) to ensure it can be easily understood by website visitors.
- Calendar of local Al-Anon events and A.A. events with Al-Anon participation, including links to the event website.
- Al-Anon service arm newsletters.
- Service arm contact information.
- Articles from *The Forum* with the "Feel free to reprint..." disclaimer may be posted on service arm websites with the appropriate attribution.
- Images from various sources, being careful to adhere to image licensing rights. (Some image providers offer royalty-free images which could be used.) Images on al-anon.org are single-use licensed images and cannot be duplicated or used by service arm websites.
- Al-Anon's Legacies are available in their entirety, as approved by the World Service Conference, on al-anon.org; and Service arm websites are encouraged to link directly to them because the Legacies are copy-

righted. Service arms wishing to post the Legacies on their own website are required to apply for a license by visiting al-anon.org/legacies-license.

- Take special care in protecting Alateen member information.
- Additional materials, a list of those service tools which may be posted online without written permission is available at al-anon.org/website-content.

Some content is not suitable for posting on service arm websites:

- It is important for all Al-Anon members to protect our copyrights, and therefore it is not appropriate to post Conference Approved Literature (CAL) on any public internet site or social platform.
- Avoid posting content from, or linking to, any outside enterprise which would violate Tradition Six.
- Avoid posting content which could be considered an official opinion or could be controversial to ensure Al-Anon's name is not drawn into controversy as suggested by Tradition Ten.
- Avoid posting content which would violate Tradition Twelve by breaking a member's anonymity.

Choosing A Web Address

Your website address should be easy to remember and accurately describes the service arm it represents. Some tips:

- Avoid using District or Area numbers or Al-Anon acronyms such as AFG.
- It is suggested service arm websites use a geographic identifier and the full name "Al-Anon" (with the hyphen) to provide an accurate description of the website and location it serves. Some examples are:
  - www.*state*al-anon.org or www.*province*al-anon.ca
  - www.*city*al-anon.org or www.*location*-al-anoncenter.org

Website Financial Matters

In keeping with the Seventh Tradition, Al-Anon service arms that create websites pay the expenses associated with it. Some expenses could include the registration of the website address, website hosting, and security certificates. Some service providers offer free services in exchange for a mention, by way of a logo or "powered by..." statement on your website. This would violate Tradition Six; therefore, it may be necessary to purchase your web services rather than risk the appearance of affiliation. Al-Anon service arms, which are registered 501(c)3 non-profit corporations, can avail themselves of discounts provided to all non-profits if no affiliation is required.

Website Considerations

As the website is created, members of the Website work group should consider reviewing and approving content with the Al-Anon Traditions and spiritual principles in mind. Website work group members should consider rotation of service when choosing a developer, taking care to ensure the website is accessible to future trusted servants.

When developing content for the website keep in mind the following considerations:

- Double check spelling and ensure the proper use of grammar.
- Consider writing your website content at the eighth grade level to improve accessibility.
- Ensure our names, Al-Anon and Alateen, are spelled properly with appropriate punctuation.
- Implement a website site map on your site. They have two primary purposes:
  - A site map page provides an easy way for visitors to navigate your website.
  - A hidden site map, which contains a complete list of all the pages on your site, is used by search engines for Search Engine Optimization (SEO).
- Use web safe fonts so that they are easy to read, such as:
  - Arial
  - Verdana
  - Helvetica
  - Times New Roman
- Create a "Contact Us" page or form so that site visitors can get in touch if they have any questions or concerns.
- Web Accessibility
  - According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) websites must be accessible to people with disabilities. Some components of compliance include:
    - Alternative Text for Images—Images should include equivalent alternative text (alt text) in the markup/code.
    - Transcripts for Audio—Providing a text transcript makes the audio information accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- When in doubt whether something should be posted or not; check with your Area Delegate, web coordinator, or website work group prior to posting.

Safety, Security, And Anonymity

The Eleventh Tradition states that members should "always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV." The Internet is considered a form of media and members should not be identified by full name or picture. Review all documents thoroughly before posting. Ensure you have permission from a member before posting a contact phone number, first name, or personal sharings. For safety reasons, never post identifying Alateen information.

- Care is needed to protect member's anonymity; this can be done by ensuring documents posted to the web server do not contain a member's full name, email address, phone number, address, or other personally identifiable information (PII).
  - Websites can and do have their servers hacked and should not be considered a completely safe place to store sensitive documents.
  - Password protected pages provide some additional protection; however, care should still be taken to avoid posting any PII on these pages.
- Backups prevent website content loss if anything unfortunate occurs. It is suggested to have a periodic backup plan for your website content which includes how to restore the data from a backup when needed.
- Periodic maintenance and updates are integral to ensuring availability of your website. Technology is continually changing, and your website should be updated accordingly to avoid risks associated with outdated functions.

Linking to Other Sites

- Linking to sites other than Al-Anon is discouraged, as we always endeavor to avoid the appearance of affiliation.
- To build a strong digital network, it is recommended service arm websites within an Area link to each other as well as linking to al-anon.org.
- al-anon.org provides links to Area and AIS websites so visitors can find local information.