

Al-Anon/Alateen Groups at Work

Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work

“Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work” provides a framework within which each group can develop and grow. It offers basic information to all group members concerning the group structure and how it relates to other groups and Al-Anon as a whole.

2018-2021

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Al-Anon/Alateen
Groups at Work



Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.
Al-Anon/Alateen World Service Office
Virginia Beach, VA

The Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength, and hope in order to solve their common problems. We believe alcoholism is a family illness and that changed attitudes can aid recovery.

Al-Anon is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization, or institution; does not engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any cause. There are no dues for membership. Al-Anon is self-supporting through its own voluntary contributions.

Al-Anon has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps, by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics, and by giving understanding and encouragement to the alcoholic.

Suggested Preamble to the Twelve Steps

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AL-ANON AND ALATEEN GROUPS AT WORK
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AI-Anon Declaration

Let It Begin with Me

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help,
let the hand of AI-Anon and Alateen
always be there, and — *Let It Begin with Me.*

Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work

“Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work” provides a framework within which each group can develop and grow. It offers basic information to all group members concerning the group structure and how it relates to other groups and Al-Anon as a whole.

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Introduction

The message of the Al-Anon Family Groups, Al-Anon and Alateen, is one of hope. It is the story of men, women, and children who once felt helpless, lost, and lonely because of another's alcoholism. Although Al-Anon grew from a need expressed by family members of Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon and Alateen offer help and hope to friends and families of alcoholics, whether the alcoholic is still drinking or not. While many of our members no longer maintain daily contact with an alcoholic, they seek the mutual support Al-Anon and Alateen groups offer.

Al-Anon is a unique fellowship that unites members of different backgrounds, races, and walks of life in an inspiring endeavor: helping themselves and others to lead purposeful, useful lives by overcoming the frustration and helplessness caused by close association with an alcoholic.

Alateen (Al-Anon for younger members) is a vital part of Al-Anon Family Groups. Young people seeking help with problems that arise when alcoholism afflicts a parent, another close relative, or a friend meet to exchange experiences and to gain an understanding of themselves and the alcoholic. This helps their own personal development and can help stabilize troubled thinking resulting from close association with an alcoholic.

"Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work" explains how to start a group, help it grow, and discover how other members have solved problems common to groups. (Note that in countries outside of the World Service Conference Structure, terms mentioned may vary according to need.) The harmony and success of each group depends on shared responsibility, a warm spirit of fellowship, and individual self-improvement.

Today these men, women and teenaged children have courage and confidence. They have found understanding and learned what to do to help themselves—and this can indirectly help their alcoholic relatives, loved ones, and friends, whether sober or not. Al-Anon will always be what we, its members, make it. In Al-Anon, we believe that our benefits are measured by our willingness to share them with others, for we know we can never give as much as we receive.

Suggested Meeting Outline

This format is included for your convenience. While not every group chooses to plan its meeting in this way, many find a general outline helpful. Groups may use the blank spaces to insert information specific to the group.

Meeting Opening

Suggested AI-Anon/Alateen Welcome (page 11)

Reading of AI-Anon/Alateen's Three Legacies (pages 14-18)

Other readings selected by the group conscience (pages 21-25)

Introductions

AI-Anon/Alateen-Related Announcements, Reports

The Meeting Program

Passing the Basket

Suggested AI-Anon/Alateen Closing (page 20)

Suggested Meeting Readings

This format is printed for your convenience. While not every group chooses to plan its meeting in this way, many find a general outline helpful.

See also the pamphlet *This Is Al-Anon* (P-32).

Meeting Opening

Most groups open with a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer.

The Serenity Prayer

Chairperson: Will you join me in a moment of silence, followed by the Serenity Prayer?

God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference.

Suggested Al-Anon/Alateen Welcome

(choose "Al-Anon" or "Alateen" as applicable)

We welcome you to the _____ Al-Anon/Alateen Family Group and hope you will find in this fellowship the help and friendship we have been privileged to enjoy.

We who live, or have lived, with the problem of alcoholism understand as perhaps few others can. We, too, were lonely and frustrated, but in Al-Anon/Alateen we discover that no situation is really hopeless and that it is possible for us to find contentment, and even happiness, whether the alcoholic is still drinking or not.

We urge you to try our program. It has helped many of us find solutions that lead to serenity. So much depends on our own attitudes, and as we learn to place our problem in its true perspective, we find it loses its power to dominate our thoughts and our lives.

The family situation is bound to improve as we apply the Al-Anon/Alateen ideas. Without such spiritual help, living with an alcoholic is too much for most of us. Our thinking becomes distorted by trying to force solutions, and we become irritable and unreasonable without knowing it.

The Al-Anon/Alateen program is based on the Twelve Steps (adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous), which we try, little by little, one day at a time, to apply to our lives, along with our slogans and the Serenity Prayer. The loving interchange of help among members and daily reading of Al-Anon/Alateen literature thus make us ready to receive the priceless gift of serenity.

Anonymity is an important principle of the Al-Anon/Alateen program. Everything that is said here, in the group meeting and member-to-member, must be held in confidence. Only in this way can we feel free to say what is in our minds and hearts, for this is how we help one another in Al-Anon/Alateen.

At this point in the meeting, many groups have the Chairperson say if the group meeting has a special format (Step-study, speakers, or discussion group), has a specific routine for calling on members, asks members of other anonymous fellowships to remain anonymous and focus on the Al-Anon program, and clarifies if the meeting is open or closed.** Members are also told how they can obtain Al-Anon and Alateen Conference Approved Literature.*

*This is an open meeting; we welcome visitors seeking information about Al-Anon, as well as newcomers and members of Al-Anon

**This is a closed meeting for Al-Anon members and prospective members only. Anyone who believes they have been affected by someone else's drinking is welcome. See also "Open/Closed Meetings."

Suggested Al-Anon Preamble to the Twelve Steps

The Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength, and hope in order to solve their common problems. We believe alcoholism is a family illness and that changed attitudes can aid recovery.

Al-Anon is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization, or institution; does not engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any cause. There are no dues for membership. Al-Anon is self-supporting through its own voluntary contributions.

Al-Anon has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps, by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics, and by giving understanding and encouragement to the alcoholic.

Suggested Alateen Preamble to the Twelve Steps

Alateen, part of the Al-Anon Family Groups, is a fellowship of young people whose lives have been affected by alcoholism in a family member or close friend. We help each other by sharing our experience, strength, and hope.

We believe alcoholism is a family disease because it affects all the members emotionally and sometimes physically. Although we cannot change or control our parents, we can detach from their problems while continuing to love them.

We do not discuss religion or become involved with any outside organizations. Our sole topic is the solution of our problems. We are always careful to protect each other's anonymity as well as that of all Al-Anon and A.A. members.

By applying the Twelve Steps to ourselves, we begin to grow mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. We will always be grateful to Alateen for giving us a wonderful, healthy program to live by and enjoy.

Many groups choose to have a member read one or all, of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and/or Twelve Concepts of Service.

Our Three Legacies

RECOVERY
THROUGH
THE
STEPS

UNITY
THROUGH
THE
TRADITIONS

SERVICE
THROUGH
THE
CONCEPTS

The threefold guides of Al-Anon point the way to a normal, useful life for the individual. They are also a framework within which the groups can carry on their affairs in harmony.

Twelve Steps

Because of their proven power and worth, A.A.'s Twelve Steps have been adopted almost word for word by Al-Anon. They represent a way of life appealing to all people of goodwill, of any religious faith or of none. Note the power of the very words.

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Twelve Traditions—Al-Anon

The Traditions that follow bind us together in unity. They guide the groups in their relations with other groups, with A.A. and the outside world. They recommend group attitudes toward leadership, membership, money, property, public relations and anonymity.

The Traditions evolved from the experience of A.A. groups in trying to solve their problems of living and working together. Al-Anon adopted these group guidelines and over the years has found them sound and wise. Although they are only suggestions, Al-Anon's unity and perhaps even its survival are dependent on adherence to these principles.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants—they do not govern.
3. The relatives of alcoholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Al-Anon Family Group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or AA as a whole.
5. Each Al-Anon Family Group has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps of AA *ourselves*, by encouraging and understanding our alcoholic relatives, and by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics.
6. Our Family Groups ought never endorse, finance or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim. Al-

though a separate entity, we should always co-operate with Alcoholics Anonymous.

7. Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Al-Anon Twelfth Step work should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. Our groups, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. The Al-Anon Family Groups have no opinion on outside issues; hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all AA members.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

Twelve Traditions—Alateen

Our group experience suggests that the unity of the Alateen Groups depends upon our adherence to these Traditions.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend. The teenage relatives of alcoholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Alateen Group provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other Alateen and Al-Anon Family Groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each Alateen Group has but one purpose: to help other teenagers of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps of AA *ourselves* and by encouraging and understanding the members of our immediate families.

6. Alateens, being part of Al-Anon Family Groups, ought never endorse, finance or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim. Although a separate entity, we should always cooperate with Alcoholics Anonymous.
7. Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alateen Twelfth Step work should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. Our groups, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. The Alateen Groups have no opinion on outside issues; hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all AA members.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

Twelve Concepts of Service

Carrying the message, as suggested in the Twelfth Step, is Service, Al-Anon's third legacy. Service, a vital purpose of Al-Anon, is action. Members strive to *do* as well as to *be*.

Anything done to help a relative or friend of an alcoholic is service: a telephone call to a despairing member or sponsoring a newcomer, telling one's story at meetings, forming groups, arranging for public outreach, distributing literature and financially supporting groups, local services and the World Service Office.

1. The ultimate responsibility and authority for Al-Anon world services belongs to the Al-Anon groups
2. The Al-Anon Family Groups have delegated complete administrative and operational authority to their Conference and its service arms.
3. The right of decision makes effective leadership possible.
4. Participation is the key to harmony.

5. The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and insure that they be heard.
6. The Conference acknowledges the primary administrative responsibility of the Trustees.
7. The Trustees have legal rights while the rights of the Conference are traditional.
8. The Board of Trustees delegates full authority for routine management of Al-Anon Headquarters to its executive committees.
9. Good personal leadership at all service levels is a necessity. In the field of world service the Board of Trustees assumes the primary leadership.
10. Service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority and double-headed management is avoided.
11. The World Service Office is composed of selected committees, executives and staff members.
12. The spiritual foundation for Al-Anon's world services is contained in the General Warranties of the Conference, Article 12 of the Charter.

General Warranties of the Conference

In all proceedings the World Service Conference of Al-Anon shall observe the spirit of the Traditions:

- (1) that only sufficient operating funds, including an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle;
- (2) that no Conference member shall be placed in unqualified authority over other members;
- (3) that all decisions be reached by discussion, vote and whenever possible by unanimity;
- (4) that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy;
- (5) that though the Conference serves Al-Anon it shall never perform any act of government; and that like the fellowship of Al-Anon Family Groups which it serves, it shall always remain democratic in thought and action.

Optional Readings

At this point in the meeting, groups may choose to read one or more of the “Optional Readings” (pages 21-25) or other selections from Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature.

Introductions

The Chairperson invites members to introduce themselves. Members may choose to use their first name only or their entire name, according to their personal preference. The Chairperson may ask newcomers to identify themselves and welcomes them. (See “Welcoming New Members.”)

Announcements and Reports

This is a time for announcement of local Al-Anon events, service meetings, and other group business, including day and time of business meetings, Treasurer’s report, and mail from the District, Area, or World Service Office. Reports may include:

- Group reports (Secretary, Treasurer, Group Representative, Intergroup Representative)
- District, Area, World Service Office
- Other Al-Anon/Alateen-related announcements

The Meeting Program

Some groups have a Program Chairperson who presents the topic for group discussion; otherwise, the Chairperson introduces the speakers or the subject to be considered. (See “Meeting Ideas.”)

Large groups may divide into smaller sessions for the meeting discussion and come back together at a given time for the “Suggested Al-Anon/Alateen Closing.”

Passing the Basket

At some point during the program, voluntary contributions are made, following this statement by the Chairperson or Treasurer:

“We have no dues or fees; according to our Seventh Tradition, ‘Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.’ We do this through our own voluntary contributions by passing the basket to cover group expenses, including rent, purchase of literature and support of our service arms. We contribute in gratitude for what we have received from Al-Anon.”

Suggested Al-Anon/Alateen Closing

In closing, I would like to say that the opinions expressed here were strictly those of the person who gave them. Take what you liked and leave the rest.

The things you heard were spoken in confidence and should be treated as confidential. Keep them within the walls of this room and the confines of your mind.

A few special words to those of you who haven't been with us long: Whatever your problems, there are those among us who have had them, too. If you try to keep an open mind, you will find help. You will come to realize that there is no situation too difficult to be bettered and no unhappiness too great to be lessened.

We aren't perfect. The welcome we give you may not show the warmth we have in our hearts for you. After a while, you'll discover that though you may not like all of us, you'll love us in a very special way—the same way we already love you.

Talk to each other, reason things out with someone else, but let there be no gossip or criticism of one another. Instead, let the understanding, love, and peace of the program grow in you one day at a time.

Will all who care to, join me in closing with the _____ prayer?

It is suggested that groups close in a manner that is agreeable to the group conscience. Many groups say the Al-Anon Declaration after their closing.

Al-Anon Declaration

Let It Begin with Me

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help,
let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen
always be there, and—*Let It Begin with Me.*

Optional Readings

The selections that follow are offered as suggestions for meeting topics or as optional readings in the group meeting format, as determined by the group conscience. They contain wisdom and information many members and groups have found helpful.

Reading on Anonymity

When newcomers or visitors are present, the group may want to read an explanation of anonymity, such as:

“Members use their full names within the fellowship when they wish. The degree of anonymity a member chooses (first name, pseudonym or full name) is not subject to criticism. Each member has the right to decide.

“Regardless of our personal choice, we guard the anonymity of everyone else in the fellowship, Al-Anon/Alateen and A.A. This means not revealing to anyone—even to relatives, friends, and other members—whom we see and what we hear at a meeting.

“Anonymity goes well beyond mere names. All of us need to feel secure in the knowledge that nothing seen or heard at a meeting will be revealed. We feel free to express ourselves among our fellow Al-Anons because we can be sure that what we say will be held in confidence.”

(From the section “Anonymity” in the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies” section of the *Service Manual*. More information on anonymity, both within and outside the fellowship, can be found in this section.)

Four Primary Ideas

The Twelve Steps suggest acceptance of four primary ideas:

- 1. We are powerless over the problem of alcoholism.** When we can honestly accept this truth, it brings us a feeling of release and hope. We can now turn our full attention to bringing our own lives into order. We can go forward to spiritual growth, to the comfort and peace to be gained from the entire program.
- 2. We can turn our lives over to a power greater than ourselves.** Now that our well-meant aid to the alcoholic has ended in failure and our own lives have become unmanageable, we realize we cannot deal with our problem objectively,

perhaps not even sanely. In Al-Anon we find a Power greater than ourselves which can direct our lives into quiet, useful channels. At first this power may seem to be the group, but as we grow in knowledge and spiritual understanding, many of us call it *God, as we understand Him*.

3. **We need to change both our attitude and our actions.** As we become willing to admit our defects, we begin to see how much of our thinking is distorted. We realize how unwise some of our actions have been, how unloving many of our attitudes. We try to recognize and correct these faults.
4. **We keep Al-Anon's gifts by sharing them with others.** This sharing makes Al-Anon the vital, forward-reaching fellowship it is. Our great obligation is to those still in need. Leading another person from despair to hope and love brings comfort to both the giver and receiver.

Three Obstacles to Success in Al-Anon*

This passage has helped many groups to resolve group problems:

All Al-Anon discussions should be constructive, helpful, loving, and understanding. In striving toward these ideals, we avoid topics that can lead to dissension and distract us from our goals.

1. **Discussions of religion:** Al-Anon is not allied with any sect or denomination. It is a spiritual program, based on no particular form of religion. Everyone is welcome, no matter what affiliation or none. Let us not defeat our purpose by entering into discussions concerning specific religious beliefs.
2. **Gossip:** We meet to help ourselves and others learn and use the Al-Anon philosophy. In such groups, gossip can have no part. We do not discuss members or others, and particularly not the alcoholic. Our dedication to anonymity gives people confidence in Al-Anon. Careless repeating of matters heard at meetings can defeat the very purposes for which we are joined together.
3. **Dominance:** Our leaders are trusted servants; they do not govern. No member of Al-Anon should direct, assume authority or give advice. Our program is based on suggestion, interchange of experience, and rotation of leadership. We progress in our own way and pace. Any attempt to manage or direct is likely to have disastrous consequences for group harmony.

*This text is from the pamphlet, *Alcoholism, the Family Disease* (P-4), © Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia, 2005.

The following explanations have helped many newcomers and longtime members understand the disease as well as how they have been affected.

Understanding Alcoholism*

What Is Alcoholism?

The American Medical Association recognizes alcoholism as a disease that can be arrested but not cured. One of the symptoms is an uncontrollable desire to drink. Alcoholism is a progressive disease. As long as alcoholics continue to drink, their drive to drink will get worse. If not dealt with, the disease can result in insanity or death. The only method of arresting alcoholism is total abstinence. Most authorities agree that even after years of sobriety, alcoholics can never drink again, because alcoholism is a lifetime disease.

There are many successful treatments for alcoholism today. Alcoholics Anonymous is the best known, and widely regarded as the most effective. Alcoholism is no longer a hopeless condition, if it is recognized and treated.

Who Are Alcoholics?

All kinds of people are alcoholics—people from all walks of life. Only a small percentage of alcoholics fit the stereotype of “derelict” or “bum” panhandling on the street. Most alcoholics appear to be functioning fairly well, but their drinking affects some part of their lives. Their family life, their social life or their work may suffer. It might be all three. Alcoholics are people whose drinking causes a continuing and growing problem in any area of their lives.

Why Do Alcoholics Drink?

Alcoholics drink because they think they have to. They use alcohol as a crutch and an escape. They are in emotional pain and use alcohol to kill that pain. Eventually they depend on alcohol so much that they become convinced they can't live without it. This is *obsession*.

When some alcoholics try to do without alcohol, the withdrawal symptoms are so overwhelming that they go back to drinking because drinking seems to be the only way to get rid of the agony. This is *addiction*.

Most alcoholics would like to be social drinkers. They spend a lot of time and effort trying to control their drinking so they will be

*This text is from the Al-Anon pamphlet *Understanding Ourselves and Alcoholism* (P-48), © Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., Virginia, 2009.

able to drink like other people. They may try drinking on weekends or drinking only a certain drink. But they can never be sure of being able to stop drinking when they want. They end up getting drunk even when they promised themselves they wouldn't. This is *compulsion*.

It is the nature of this disease that alcoholics do not believe they are ill. This is *denial*. Hope for recovery lies in their ability to recognize a need for help, their desire to stop drinking, and their willingness to admit that they cannot cope with the problem by themselves.

Understanding Ourselves

Families and Friends Are Affected

Alcoholism is a family disease. Compulsive drinking affects the drinker and it affects the drinker's relationships. Friendships, employment, childhood, parenthood, love affairs, and marriages all suffer from the effects of alcoholism. Those special relationships in which a person is really close to an alcoholic are affected most, and we who care are the most caught up in the behavior of another person. We react to an alcoholic's behavior. Seeing that the drinking is out of hand, we try to control it. We are ashamed of the public scenes but try to handle it in private. It isn't long before we feel we are to blame and take on the hurts, the fears, and the guilt of an alcoholic. We, too, can become ill.

Even well-meaning people often begin to count the number of drinks another person is having. We may pour expensive liquor down drains, search the house for hidden bottles or listen for the sound of opening cans. All our thinking becomes directed at what the alcoholic is doing or not doing and how to get the drinker to stop drinking. This is our *obsession*.

Watching fellow human beings slowly kill themselves with alcohol is painful. While alcoholics don't seem to worry about the bills, the job, the children or the condition of their health, the people around them usually begin to worry. We often make the mistake of covering up. We try to fix everything, make excuses, tell little lies to mend damaged relationships, and worry some more. This is our *anxiety*.

Sooner or later the alcoholic's behavior makes other people angry. As we realize that the alcoholic is telling lies, using us, and not taking care of responsibilities, we may begin to feel that the alcoholic doesn't love us. We often want to strike back, punish, and make the

alcoholic pay for the hurt and frustration caused by uncontrolled drinking. This is our *anger*.

Sometimes those who are close to the alcoholic begin to pretend. We accept promises and trust the alcoholic. Each time there is a sober period, however brief, we want to believe the problem has gone away forever. When good sense tells us there is something wrong with the alcoholic's drinking and thinking, we still hide how we feel and what we know. This is our *denial*.

Perhaps the most severe damage to those of us who have shared some part of life with an alcoholic comes in the form of the nagging belief that we are somehow at fault. We may feel it was something we did or did not do—that we were not good enough, not attractive enough or not clever enough to have solved this problem for the one we love. These are our *feelings of guilt*.

Help and Hope

We who have turned to Al-Anon have often done so in despair, unable to believe in the possibility of change and unable to go on as we have before. We feel cheated out of a loving companion, over-burdened with responsibilities, unwanted, unloved, and alone. There are times when some of us can act arrogant, smug, self-righteous, and dominating. We come to Al-Anon, however, because we want and need help.

While we may have been driven to Al-Anon by the effects of someone else's drinking, we soon come to know that our own thinking has to change before we can make a new and successful approach to living. It is in Al-Anon that we learn to deal with our obsession, our anxiety, our anger, our denial, and our feelings of guilt. It is through the fellowship that we ease our emotional burdens by sharing our experience, strength, and hope with others. Little by little, we come to realize at our meetings that much of our discomfort comes from our attitudes. We begin to change these attitudes and learn about our responsibilities to ourselves. We discover feelings of self-worth and love, and we grow spiritually. The emphasis begins to be lifted from the alcoholic and placed where we do have some power—over our own lives.

The group may choose to read other selections from Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature (CAL) as decided by the group conscience, with the source of the reading noted.

History: Al-Anon and Alateen

How Al-Anon Family Groups Came to Be

The Family Group idea is nearly as old as Alcoholics Anonymous. In A.A.'s pioneering days from 1935 to 1941, close relatives of recovering alcoholics realized that to solve their personal problems they needed to apply the same principles that helped alcoholics with their recovery.

As early A.A. members and their wives visited A.A. groups throughout the country, the visiting wives told the mates of the newer A.A.s about the personal help received when they themselves tried to live by A.A.'s Twelve Steps, and how this helped to improve family relationships that often remained difficult even after the alcoholic had become sober.

Thus, mates and relatives of A.A. members began to hold meetings to discuss *their* common problems.

By 1948, numbers of Family Groups had applied to the A.A. General Service Office for listing in the A.A. Directory, and scores of relatives of alcoholics had asked them for help. But A.A. was designed to aid alcoholics only.

In 1951, two wives of A.A.s, Lois W. and Anne B., formed a Clearing House Committee to get in touch with these 87 inquirers and to coordinate, unify, and serve them; 56 groups responded. As a result of questionnaires, the name Al-Anon Family Groups was chosen. The Al-Anon name is simply a derivative of the first syllables of "Alcoholics Anonymous." The Twelve Steps of A.A., virtually unchanged, and later the Twelve Traditions were both adopted as guiding principles.

Soon the movement came to public attention. New groups and individuals here and abroad wrote to the Clearing House about their problems. By 1954, a small paid Staff became necessary. The Clearing House was incorporated as a nonprofit organization under the name Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.

In 1955, Al-Anon's first book, *The Al-Anon Family Groups, A Guide for the Families of Problem Drinkers*, was published. Since then, many more books and pamphlets were added.

In 1961, Al-Anon initiated its annual World Service Conference of Delegates, WSO Staff, and Volunteers to act as the fellowship's overall conscience. In the quarter century from 1951 to 1976, over 12,000 groups in the United States, Canada, and many lands overseas were added to the original 56.

In 2001, the WSO started registering on-line meetings, and in 2007, phone and other electronic meetings. Electronic meetings offered Al-Anon members a means of connecting and sharing the Al-Anon program regardless of location.

By 2018 there were over 25,000 groups in 133 countries and 107 electronic (digital, social media and phone) meetings.

How Alateen Came to Be a Part of Al-Anon Family Groups

Teenage children in the families of alcoholics soon realized that their problems differed from those of adult members. In 1957, Alateen grew out of this need. A 17-year-old boy, whose father was in A.A. and mother in Al-Anon, had been fairly successful in trying to solve his problems by applying the A.A. Steps and slogans.

With his parents' encouragement, he asked five other teenagers with alcoholic parents to join him in forming a group to help other teenagers. The idea caught on, and the number of groups began to grow.

In response to articles distributed by the WSO, 10 new Alateen groups were registered, and by 1958, the Board of Directors announced 31 new Alateen groups, with 39 more proposed, and its decision to establish an Alateen Committee.

In 1957, *Youth and the Alcoholic Parent* was submitted by California Alateen groups for publication. Subsequently, several books and pamphlets were produced as well as a newsletter, *Alateen Talk*, and the video *Alateen Tells It like It Is* (no longer sold).

By the end of 1962, there were 203 registered groups, and the Alateen program was spreading to other countries. In April of 1964, a Staff member was added to work for Alateen, to handle correspondence with members and groups, send free packets of literature to new groups, and respond to inquiries from concerned professionals.

In 2003, the Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. Board of Trustees took action to assure the safety of Alateens and Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS). The 2003 Alateen Motion from the Board of Trustees required that all Al-Anon Areas in the World Service Conference (WSC) Structure establish Area Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements and have a process for certification of Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS).

By 2018, there were numerous Alateen pamphlets, leaflets, and books; a quarterly newsletter, *Alateen Talk*; and service materials

for Alateen Group Sponsors. There are over 1,600 Alateen groups worldwide, including six Alateen Chat meetings and a presence on social media sites.

How to Start a Group

In the World Service Conference Structure, all Alateen groups are registered through their Area's Alateen Process. (See "Starting an Alateen Group" and "Alateen Policies.") In other structures, members should contact their national office.

Spiritual Principles behind Starting an Al-Anon Family Group

Tradition Three

The relatives and friends of alcoholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Al-Anon Family Group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend.

If there is no Al-Anon group in your community, you may start one, along with one or two other people who need and want Al-Anon's help. Any two or more relatives or friends of alcoholics who meet to solve their common problems may call themselves an Al-Anon group, provided they have no other affiliation as a group. For more information see the guidelines *Starting an Al-Anon Group* (G-12), *Starting an Alateen Group* (G-19), and/or contact the World Service Office or national service structure.

Benefits of Registration with the WSO

- The WSO provides meeting information (to newcomers, professionals and others) about registered groups, to carry out Al-Anon's one purpose: to help families and friends of alcoholics. The day, time and location of registered groups is posted on the WSO website (al-anon.org) and provided to callers on the WSO toll-free meeting line, (888) 4AL-ANON.
- Registered groups are connected to the worldwide fellowship through communications sent via email and postal mail from the WSO.
- Registration with the WSO provides, through the World Service Conference, a link to worldwide Al-Anon and Alateen that assures unity of purpose and a common bond of love and friendship available to each member, no matter where they may travel.

Considerations When Starting an Al-Anon or Alateen Group

When to Hold the Meeting

Before choosing a meeting time, it is helpful to know when other Al-Anon and Alateen meetings are held in your community to avoid conflicting days and times.

Where to Hold Group Meetings

Al-Anon and Alateen group meetings are usually held weekly in a public place that is welcoming to all, such as a community room, an institution, library, a school building or any other suitable place. When meeting in a public place is not an option for a group, as it is in some countries, a group may temporarily meet at the home of a member. (See the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies” section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* [P-24/27] for descriptions of introductory meetings and limited-access facilities.)

Naming the Group

Tradition Four

Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or AA as a whole.

An Al-Anon or Alateen group’s name reflects the spirit of Al-Anon’s primary purpose of welcoming and giving comfort to families and friends of alcoholics and often appears on websites and local meeting lists. Group names can include the topic of the meeting such as a Step or slogan or a phrase reflective of Al-Anon principles. A group name can reference the area of the town where it meets. When choosing a group name, care is taken to avoid the appearance of affiliation and/or endorsement of other organizations, other Twelve Step programs, religious beliefs and meeting facilities.

The name of an Al-Anon or Alateen group is a reflection of Step Twelve in action. Since nicknames or attempts at humorous names could confuse potential members and prevent them from attending the meeting, it is suggested they not be used in the group name.

The WSO will register groups that are designated for men, women, parents, adult children, young adults, other gender identification/sexual orientation, etc. with the understanding that, in keeping

with Traditions Three and Five, the group will welcome anyone affected by someone else's drinking.

In the spirit of unity, the WSO reviews new group names and may ask a group to choose another name if it is not in keeping with Al-Anon/Alateen principles. (See also "Group Names" in the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* [P-24/27].) All Al-Anon groups are registered with the letters AFG (for Al-Anon Family Group) to ensure members' anonymity.

Open/Closed Meetings

All Al-Anon Family Group meetings welcome anyone who believes that his/her life has been affected by someone else's drinking, either currently or in the past. An Al-Anon meeting may choose to be "**open**" or "**closed**" by the consent of its participants.

Open Al-Anon meetings allow attendance by people who are not families and friends of alcoholics, but who are interested in learning about Al-Anon Family Groups. People who may come to open Al-Anon meetings occasionally include students and professionals who work with alcoholics and their families.

Closed Al-Anon meetings are limited to members and prospective members, giving them the freedom to share and listen to the experience, strength, and hope of one another on a confidential and anonymous basis.

A meeting registered as closed may choose to make one or more of its meetings open to the public, to ensure that those interested in Al-Anon can find an open meeting. Should an observer show up at a closed meeting, members can take a quick consensus on whether to allow them to sit in. In the spirit of responsibility, groups may consider directing the observer to an open Al-Anon meeting and Members are encouraged to treat visitors with courtesy and respect for showing an interest in our fellowship.

Observers attending open Al-Anon meetings are requested to abide by the principles that guide participation in all Al-Anon Family Group meetings, most especially the principles of confidentiality and members should exercise care in what they share at an open meeting.

All Alateen meetings are closed; ordinarily only the Alateen members and the Area-certified Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) who are serving as the Alateen Group Sponsors attend. However, designated Area trusted servants

may occasionally attend the meeting as a resource to the group, per the Area's Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements. (See "The Alateen Meeting" and the "Alateen Policies" section of the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies.")

Beginners' Meetings

Beginners' meetings offer newcomers the opportunity to discuss their feelings in a caring and comfortable environment. They provide newcomers the opportunity to learn from current Al-Anon members who share their experience, strength and hope as a result of practicing the Al-Anon program. Experienced Al-Anon members introduce newcomers to the Al-Anon program through Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature and the first three Steps, as well as inform them about the far-reaching effects of the family disease of alcoholism.

There are two types of Beginners' meetings:

- Some beginner's groups meet weekly as separate groups, are registered as Beginners' Al-Anon groups and focus on beginners' topics. They elect their own Group Representative. They may use "Beginner" as part of their group name. The *Beginners' Meeting Guideline* (G-2) is posted on the Members menu at al-anon.org and can be downloaded and printed as needed for members' use.
- Some groups hold special beginners' meetings in conjunction with the regular group meeting, for a designated time before, during or after the regular meeting to provide newcomers with a simple introduction to Al-Anon. These beginners' meetings are part of the regular group and do not register as a separate group. They are served by the Group Representative of the hosting Al-Anon group. There is a space on the New Al-Anon Group Registration Form to indicate if a group offers such a meeting format.

Multiple Meetings

While the majority of new meetings are individual groups, some groups consist of more than one meeting. They are one group that meets on two or more days at the same location.

Prior to registering a group with multiple meetings, it is suggested that the members of the group discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being one group with multiple meetings in order to make an informed group conscience decision:

- Meetings that register as separate groups are each eligible to have their own WSO ID number, Group Representative, Current Mailing Address (CMA), phone contacts and receive WSO, Area and local mailings.
- Groups that register with multiple meetings share the same name, WSO ID number, CMA, phone contacts and share one Group Representative. District, Area and WSO mailings (postal and email) are sent to one CMA to share with all the meetings in the group. Multiple meetings of one group have only one voice and one vote at District meetings and Area Assemblies. It is important that groups with multiple meetings hold regularly-scheduled business meetings so that members from all the meetings are able to share information and participate in making group decisions. (See “Group Business Meetings.”)

A meeting that is initially one of the multiple meeting of a group may later decide, by a group conscience decision of the members of that meeting, to re-register as a separate group.

Procedures for Starting an Electronic Al-Anon Meeting (Digital, Social Media and Phone)

Al-Anon Family Groups also meet electronically, either digitally or via phone. Electronic meetings can introduce the potential newcomer to Al-Anon Family Groups, can support those without access to a local meeting and are available to any member. Al-Anon electronic meeting information is posted on the Members menu at al-anon.org.

The WSO registers electronic meetings with the understanding that the meeting will abide by the Traditions, protect member anonymity, not affiliate with or endorse any outside entity or practice, and that meetings will be open to any Al-Anon member or prospective member.

In addition to the steps necessary to start meetings in physical locations, the basics to start an Al-Anon electronic meeting are:

- Determine what type of meeting you want to start – digital (voice, written, text, video), social media or phone.
- Determine what platform service provider to use.
- Review the *Electronic Meeting Guideline* (G-39) and the *Fact Sheet for Electronic Meetings* (S-60*). Complete the Al-Anon

*Currently available in English only.

Electronic Meeting Registration Form, with CMA and contact information, and submit to the WSO.

- Contact the WSO with any questions.

The WSO reviews electronic meetings for adherence to Tradition Eleven, ensuring that no member's personal information (e.g. full name and/or face, email address or phone number) is published in conjunction with the meeting. Following completion of the registration process, the meeting is listed on al-anon.org.

As is the case with physical meeting facilities, a group's selection of a platform service provider to host their electronic meeting is not intended to endorse, oppose or lend support to the digital or phone service provider or specific communication devices.

All electronic meetings are registered with the WSO, regardless of language or structure. For safety reasons, the WSO does not currently register electronic Alateen meetings that are not also administered by the WSO.

Procedures for Starting an Al-Anon Group

Group Contact Information

Current Mailing Address (CMA)

The **CMA** is a member of the group who attends the group's meeting regularly, agrees to accept and deliver the group's mail, and anticipates keeping the same address for at least a year. The CMA may be, but does not have to be, the Group Representative (GR) or another group officer. Each group needs to have someone who is willing to receive mail and take it to the group, as it is essential to be able to contact the group.

Email is used for time-sensitive communications with the group and to notify the group when the monthly web-based news from the WSO is available. The CMA's email address will be used for WSO mailings unless the group has a group email address. (See "Group Email Address.")

Up-to-date CMA information assures the group of promptly receiving all mail. The WSO and the local service arms are to be notified immediately when the CMA changes, so there will be no disruption of service to the group.

Group Email Address

A group has the option to create a **group email address** to receive electronic mailings. (See “Anonymity” in the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies” for tips on maintaining personal anonymity when using email within the fellowship.)

Phone Contact for the Public

Phone contacts are members of the group who are willing to receive phone calls and extend a warm welcome to newcomers, travelers, professionals and others seeking information about their Al-Anon group. They provide a personal invitation to newcomers to attend the next meeting, including details about how to find the group’s meeting room. Serving as the group’s phone contact for the public is Step Twelve in action. A phone contact’s first name and phone number may be provided to callers seeking information on the Al-Anon toll-free meeting line. In keeping with Tradition Eleven, it is not appropriate to post members’ names or phone numbers on public venues such as websites or posters.

Communication with the WSO

As part of the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon and Alateen, groups are asked to provide a postal address and an email address, so they can receive news and information from the WSO.

WSO Registration Process*

The WSO will register a group with the understanding that the group will abide by the Al-Anon Traditions and not affiliate with or endorse any outside entity or practice

Joint meetings for Al-Anon and A.A. members, meetings comprised of only A.A. members, and groups that practice specific therapies, such as guided meditation, are not in keeping with Al-Anon principles and do not qualify to be registered as an Al-Anon group.

The process is simple:

- Decide on a group meeting place, day, and time.
- Review the guideline *Starting an Al-Anon Meeting* (G-12).
- Decide the meeting type (open, closed, limited access, introductory, or electronic).
- Decide the meeting format (i.e. Steps, Traditions, Concepts, Literature, Topic/Discussion, etc. [See “Meeting Ideas.”]).

*In other countries outside the World Service Conference structure, services to new groups vary.

- The group may choose a group type for a specific group of people (i.e. adult children, parents/grandparents, women, men, gays and lesbians and young adults) with the understanding that all Al-Anon groups welcome anyone seeking an Al-Anon meeting (Tradition Three).
- Contact your District Representative or Area Group Records Coordinator to obtain information on the Area group registration process. (The WSO New Al-Anon Group Registration Form and instructions on how to complete the form are posted under the Members menu at al-anon.org.)
- Return the completed New Al-Anon Group Registration Form through your Area process or to the WSO via e-mail, fax, or postal mail.

Once the WSO reviews the completed form, a group ID number is assigned and a packet containing introductory materials is sent to the group's Current Mailing Address (CMA). (See "Considerations when Starting an Al-Anon or Alateen Group.")

New and prospective groups are encouraged to connect with their Area Group Records Coordinator or District Representative to find how to be included in the local meeting directory and on the Area website. Some Areas and Al-Anon Information Services (AISs) may require a separate registration form.

Prospective groups may contact the World Service Office for further information and/or to request that the information be sent via postal mail.

Getting the Al-Anon or Alateen Meeting Started

- Thoroughly review all the materials sent from the WSO.
- Decide who will fill the positions necessary to begin, such as CMA, Chairperson, and Secretary/Treasurer. The CMA of an Alateen group must be a certified AMIAS.
- As a group, work out the details of how the meeting will be conducted.
- Contact your District Representative (DR) to find out how to get the meeting listed on the Area and local websites as well as the local meeting list.

Initial Group Service Positions

The leadership of a group should be kept simple.

A **small group** needs a CMA (Current Mailing Address), Chairperson, and a Secretary; the latter often acts as Treasurer until the

group is large enough to elect one. One or two members agree to be listed as group contacts to take Twelfth Step calls from newcomers. (See "Phone Contact for the Public.")

As membership in the group grows, additional service opportunities can be added such as Treasurer, Group Representative (GR), Literature Chairperson, someone in charge of hospitality, greeters, and other positions as suggested by the group conscience.

Large groups may choose to have a Program Chairperson, Business or Steering Committee, and Information Service Representative (ISR) in addition to other positions as suggested by the group conscience. When possible, alternates are elected for all positions.

(See details of these trusted servants' duties in the section "Suggested Duties of Group Officers/Leaders.")

Starting an Alateen Group

Where Al-Anon is firmly established, groups may want to help the adolescent members of the Al-Anon family by starting an Alateen group through the Area's Alateen process.

Alateen groups are usually started at the suggestion of an Al-Anon or A.A. member, a professional, school personnel or the teenagers themselves. Alateen groups require Alateen Group Sponsors who are Al-Anon members certified in accordance with their Area's Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements to become). Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS Al-Anon members who are also members of A.A. may be certified as an AMIAS and serve as an Alateen Group Sponsor in keeping with the Area's Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements. Anonymity regarding other programs is maintained in the Alateen meeting, just as it would be in any Al-Anon meeting. Alateen is an integral part of Al-Anon, thus emphasis is placed at all times on the Al-Anon/Alateen interpretation of the program.

Parents/guardians who are currently certified through their Area Alateen process may serve as Alateen Group Sponsors; however, whenever possible, it is preferred that the Sponsor not be a relative of any of the Alateen members attending the Alateen group.

Suggestions on selecting a meeting location and naming the group can be found under the section "Procedures to Follow when Starting an Al-Anon Group." Additional information can be found in the guidelines *How to Start an Alateen Meeting* (G-19) and *Alateen Safety Guidelines* (G-34) are available under the Members menu at

al-anon.org. (See also “Alateen Policy” in the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies” section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* [P-24/27].)

Procedures for Starting an Alateen Group

When the World Service Office is contacted about starting an Alateen meeting, the WSO thanks the caller or writer for his/her interest and explains that Alateen meetings require Alateen Group Sponsors who have completed the Area’s Alateen certification process as an Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS). Al-Anon members will be referred to their Area Alateen Coordinator for information on the Area process for AMIAS certification and group registration.

If the inquirer is not an Al-Anon member, the WSO will send an Alateen information packet to the inquirer and the inquirer’s contact information to the Area Alateen Coordinator and ask the Coordinator to follow up (or refer to another local member) to provide additional information. If the inquirer is a professional, the WSO will mail an Alateen information packet to them with the information that a local member will be in contact within a few weeks. Alateen Group Registration/Change forms and Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) forms are distributed by the Area and submitted to the WSO through the Area’s Alateen process. When the WSO receives a new Alateen group registration form from the Area, the WSO registers the group and assigns a WSO group number. The group is added to the mailing list for complimentary WSO publications. These publications, including *Alateen Talk* and other WSO mailings, are sent to the group’s Current Mailing Address (CMA) that is listed on the group registration form. (See “CMA.”) Phone contacts and Alateen group CMAs are Alateen Group Sponsors or other Area-certified AMIAS.

The WSO toll-free meeting line may refer prospective members to the group. Contact information may be given to callers who request specific information about the meeting such as directions, what door to use, age range of the Alateens, etc. It is important that the group keep its Area up-to-date on any changes in the group information. Alateen group changes are submitted to the WSO through the Area’s Alateen process.

It may be difficult for an Alateen group to be financially fully self-supporting at first. Financial support for group expenses such as literature, refreshments, and rent may be provided by Al-Anon

group(s), but only until the Alateen group is able to meet its own expenses. Some teens may not have a lot of money, but the spiritual act of contributing reinforces the idea of belonging as a member.

Some Alateen group meetings are held at schools during school hours and are attended only by students from the school. Alateen Group Sponsors at these limited-access meetings must also be certified through the Area Alateen process, as well as meet the school's safety requirements. More information on school meetings is available in the *Alateen Meetings in Schools* Guideline (G-5), *Information for Educators: Alateen Meetings in Schools* leaflet (S-64), and the "Alateen Policy" section in the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27).

Anyone wanting to start an Alateen meeting outside of the World Service Conference Structure is directed by the WSO to that country's national service committee or General Service Office (GSO) if one exists. See also "Considerations when Starting an Al-Anon or Alateen Group."

Alateen Meetings

Tradition Three—Alateen

The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend. The teenage relatives of alcoholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Alateen Group provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

Alateen meetings are closed meetings. Only Alateens and the Area-certified Alateen Group Sponsors attend. Designated Area trusted servants may occasionally attend the meeting as a resource to the group per the Area's Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements.

Groups that meet each week are apt to be more firmly established from the outset, particularly when the Alateen members communicate with one another between meetings. Weekly meetings give members more frequent opportunity to share how they are working the program and applying it to their daily lives.

All Alateen Group Sponsors, even temporary or substitute Sponsors, must be certified through their Area Alateen process before being of service to Alateen. When a regular Alateen Group Sponsor is not available, another Al-Anon member who has been certified through the Area's Alateen process can serve as an Alateen Group Sponsor.

Alateens are always welcome to attend an Al-Anon meeting. When there are no certified Al-Anon members available to be of service to the Alateen group, the Alateens are encouraged to attend the Al-Anon meeting. Certified AMIAS are not required to be in attendance when young people attend an Al-Anon meeting; the Al-Anon group is responsible for the safety of all in attendance. (See “Alateen Policy” section of the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies.”)

Alateen groups may hold an occasional (annual, bi-annual, or quarterly) open meeting to celebrate the group anniversary, to inform professionals or others about Alateen, or for another special occasion. Open meetings may have one or more speakers that explain how the Al-Anon/Alateen program works. The guidelines *The Open Al-Anon Meeting* (G-27) and *A Meeting on Wheels* (G-22) can offer valuable information.

Basics for Group Meetings

Membership

Tradition Three

The relatives of alcoholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Al-Anon Family Group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend.

Al-Anon and Alateen membership is open to anyone who feels his or her life has been affected by someone else’s drinking, either currently or in the past. In keeping with Tradition Three, all family members and friends of problem drinkers are welcome to attend Al-Anon meetings in order to decide for themselves whether Al-Anon can benefit them. New members are encouraged to attend different meetings, to find groups where they feel most comfortable.

Members join local groups where the Al-Anon/Alateen program is shared and where members participate in group service. Al-Anon and Alateen members usually consider one group as their “home group.” A home group encourages personal and group growth by offering a variety of service opportunities within the group, connecting its members to the worldwide fellowship through service in the District, Area, and world services.

Sharing in Al-Anon/Alateen Meetings

Tradition One

Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.

In group meetings, we share our own experience, strength, and hope, keeping the focus on ourselves and how the Al-Anon/Alateen program has helped us change our attitudes and actions. Our discussions center on solutions for our own difficulties. We try not to tell other people's stories or repeat what we see or hear, always protecting one another's anonymity and the anonymity of Al-Anon, Alateen, and A.A. members, as well.

We concentrate on our own feelings and attitudes, rather than on the details of our situation. Members leave other affiliations (such as other Twelve Step programs or professional resources) outside our meeting rooms.

It is suggested that Al-Anon/Alateen members avoid discussion of specific religious beliefs or ideas, criticism of one another or the alcoholic, gossip, or revealing intimate details of their problems. More detailed discussion may take place between meetings in private conversations with another member, or a personal Sponsor. (See "Three Obstacles to Success in Al-Anon" and "Sponsorship" in the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* [P-24/27].)

Welcoming New Members

The newcomer to Al-Anon/Alateen is often nervous, lonely, and usually desperate. In addition to the help, guidance, and literature provided by the group, individual attention and the friendship of an established member can be of great help.

If a group has a beginners' meeting, newcomers to Al-Anon/Alateen are encouraged to attend. After the new members have attended a number of regular meetings, group members encourage them to express themselves, ask them to read aloud the Serenity Prayer, the Suggested Preamble, or in some small way take part in the group functions so they will feel they belong.

Where there is no beginners' meeting, members can briefly share their experience, strength, and hope; provide the newcomers with Conference Approved Literature (possibly a *Newcomer Packet* [K-10]); urge them to read the material; offer to talk or text between meetings and share with them the value of using the program to cope with problems.

It is helpful to provide new members of the group with an explanation of the group's meeting format, method of sharing, and advise them that in Al-Anon meetings, members refrain from discussing specific religious tenets, therapies, and other affiliations.

It is also helpful to keep in touch with the new members between meetings.

For more information, see the guideline *Beginners' Meetings* (G-2).

Anonymity

Tradition Twelve

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

Anonymity in Al-Anon is a sacred trust, basic to our fellowship and its survival.

The principle of anonymity is essential during meetings to assure the confidentiality of who is present and what is shared at the meetings. In time some members become willing to share their full names within the fellowship, in order to serve it. In time some members become willing to share their full names within the fellowship, in order to serve it. As time progresses, some members decide to let their membership in Al-Anon be known to professionals in the community so others can receive Al-Anon's help. Each member chooses when and why he or she lets others outside their meeting know he or she is attending Al-Anon. The principle of anonymity encourages each member to respect the reasons for this personal decision and make no judgments about them.

Special Note: Anonymity is a spiritual principle and cannot be used as a legal basis to shield criminal behavior, past or current. It is wise to remember that Al-Anon and Alateen meetings are not above the law. Members need to exercise care in sharing information that could require reporting to local, state, provincial, or national authorities.

Tradition Eleven

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all AA members.

The principle of anonymity acts as a restraint on members at the public level, to assure that no one will use Al-Anon for profit, prestige, or power. This means that at the level of press, radio, films, TV

and the internet, full names and faces of Al-Anon and Alateen members are not used. No Al-Anon member can speak as an authority on Al-Anon in the media. No one's story is more important than others. We are a fellowship of equals and Al-Anon is a program of principles, not personalities.

At open Al-Anon meetings, group anniversaries, conventions, or workshops where non-members are present, Al-Anon and Alateen members are free to decide how much anonymity they prefer. It is suggested to open such meetings with a brief explanation of the Eleventh and Twelfth Traditions. One suggestion is as follows: "There may be some who are not familiar with our Tradition of personal anonymity in any form of press, radio, films, TV, internet, and other electronic media.

"If so, we respectfully ask that no Al-Anon, Alateen, or A.A. speaker or member be identified by full name or picture in published, broadcast, or Web-posted reports of our meeting." The assurance of anonymity is essential to our efforts to help other families of alcoholics, and our Tradition of anonymity reminds us to place Al-Anon and Alateen principles above personalities."

Event planners may want to make a further note about anonymity and picture-taking. Here is one suggested statement:

"Out of respect for others, please do not take photographs during any of the meetings at this event. Please be considerate when taking photographs, using care that you do not capture images of Al-Anon, Alateen, A.A. members, or their guests who did not give their permission and may not wish to appear in your pictures. In the spirit of Tradition Eleven, please do not post recognizable photos of identifiable Al-Anon, Alateen, A.A. members or their guests on websites accessible to the public, including unrestricted pages on social media sites."

See "Anonymity" in the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) for more information on the principle of anonymity.

Meeting Ideas

There is no rigid formula for an Al-Anon or Alateen meeting. The general pattern is to have the Chairperson or leader open and close the meeting, announce the meeting topics, or introduce guest speakers or members who share their experience, strength, and hope as a result of working the Al-Anon program. Experience sug-

gests that more can be accomplished when members share on a single topic during the meeting and as many members as possible have the opportunity to share.

Discussion Meetings

The Chairperson or leader presents an Al-Anon or Alateen topic to help members focus their thoughts and discuss the subject as it applies to them. Topics may include:

- **Twelve Steps:** It is suggested that one of the Steps be covered in at least one meeting per month. The Chairperson or leader usually reads the Step and may read a passage from the books *Al-Anon's Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions* (B-8), *How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics* (B-32), or *Paths to Recovery—Al-Anon's Steps, Traditions, and Concepts* (B-24), and the accompanying *Paths to Recovery Workbook* (P-93), the workbook *Reaching for Personal Freedom—Living the Legacies* (P-92) or from an issue of *The Forum*. The Steps also appear in many other Al-Anon publications. Members may then comment on the Step and how it applies to their situation.
- **Twelve Traditions:** The group studies one or more of the Traditions and their value in maintaining group harmony and growth, keeping in mind the goal of Al-Anon unity worldwide. The procedure for a Tradition meeting and the sources of material, for the most part, are the same as those for a Step meeting.
- **Twelve Concepts of Service:** A better understanding of Al-Anon World Services and the application of these principles to our personal lives can be obtained by study of the Twelve Concepts of Service, found in the *Service Manual*, the books *How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics* (B-32), *Paths to Recovery—Al-Anon's Steps, Traditions, and Concepts* (B-24), and the accompanying *Paths to Recovery Workbook* (P-93), the workbook *Reaching for Personal Freedom—Living the Legacies* (P-92) and the pamphlet *The Concepts—Al-Anon's Best Kept Secret?* (P-57).
- **Al-Anon Slogans:** One or more of the slogans may serve as the basis for a discussion regarding their value in daily living. They appear in the book *How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics* (B-32), and throughout our books, literature, and *The Forum*, as they also help us deal with our day-to-day personal situations.
- **Panel Discussions:** Members present are invited to submit questions, anonymously, if so desired, to a panel of two or three mem-

bers chosen by the Chairperson or leader to share their experiences in handling these situations. This may also be followed by informal discussion by the entire group; the Chairperson, by limiting each person to one or two minutes, can make sure that no one monopolizes the discussion.

- **Literature Meetings:** An unlimited supply of topics can be found in Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature. Many groups allot one meeting a month to discuss a particularly interesting subject from the current issue of *The Forum*, Al-Anon/Alateen's monthly magazine. *The Forum* is a Conference approved publication for use in meetings, presenting meeting topics and personal stories for group discussions; likewise, the newsletters *Al-Anon y Alateen en acción* and *Le lien* are available for Spanish and French-speaking members. Members may also discuss the optional readings in the "Suggested Meeting Outline" section.

Speaker Meetings

- **Personal Stories:** Two or three Al-Anon or Alateen members may be asked to speak at the meeting, to tell how the Al-Anon program helps them in their daily living.
- **Exchange Meeting:** An individual or a team of speakers from another group, including Alateen, may be willing to exchange speakers between your groups.
- **Special Event:** Occasions such as group anniversaries may serve as an invitation to the Al-Anon program by featuring Al-Anon or Alateen speakers whose personal stories of recovery through the Al-Anon program can give strength and hope to those who hear them.
- **Outside Speakers:** Individuals from the community may occasionally be invited to address an Al-Anon/Alateen meeting. Those selected should be knowledgeable about alcoholism; however, having professional speakers too often at Al-Anon/Alateen meetings may divert us from our own recovery program.
- **A.A. Speaker:** An occasional talk by an A.A. member often presents insights into the disease of alcoholism from the viewpoint of an alcoholic.

Beginners' Meetings

When newcomers are present, the group may spend some or all of the meeting time welcoming the newcomer by having one

or more members share their reasons for coming to Al-Anon and how it has helped them. Some beginners' meeting topics might be discussion of one of the first three Steps, detachment, the Serenity Prayer or a slogan. The *Beginners' Meeting* Guideline (G-2) is posted under the Members menu at al-anon.org.

Ideas for Occasional Meetings

Writing Meetings

Some groups hold occasional writing meetings. These can be a rich source of material for Conference Approved Literature. Writing meetings are similar to discussion meetings in which the Chairperson or leader presents an Al-Anon or Alateen topic and helps members to focus their thoughts on the subject as it applies to them. Then, members take ten to 15 minutes to capture their thoughts in writing. In the remaining meeting time, members who feel comfortable doing so may share aloud with the group what they wrote on the topic. Members provide contact information if they are willing to submit their written sharings to the WSO for possible inclusion in a new piece of CAL, *The Forum*, *Alateen Talk* or another publication. The contact information is only used to notify the member in the event the sharing is published. Members are encouraged to submit sharings in English, or in Spanish or French with an accompanying English translation, when submitting to the WSO for consideration.

Group Inventory Meeting

A group inventory may be held during the regular meeting time or at a time convenient to most members. An inventory may be based on the guideline *Taking a Group Inventory* (G-8a & G-8b), posted under the Members menu at al-anon.org. See also "Group Business."

Public Outreach Meeting

The function and usefulness of Al-Anon/Alateen can be explained to a wider audience if an open meeting is planned at which members, their relatives and friends, A.A. members, students, professionals and the general public are welcome. A meeting held to celebrate a special occasion is usually open. See the guidelines *The Open Al-Anon Meeting* (G-27) and *A Meeting on Wheels* (G-22).

Supporting Group Growth

No matter what the size of the group, carrying the message is essential to attracting new members. Groups can inform local professionals, including spiritual leaders, members of the medical and legal professions, and others in your community who have occasion to counsel families of alcoholics. This can be done either in person or by mail. Be sure to let them know exactly when and where your meetings are held, and who their clients may call for a personal contact. Some groups announce meetings in a brief newspaper advertisement; some papers will include such listings without charge in the local events column.

Within the fellowship, inform your District Representative and local Al-Anon Information Service (AIS or Intergroup) to request the new meeting be listed in the local meeting schedule and on the local website. Attending nearby Al-Anon groups and/or your District meeting will help spread the word. Additionally, A.A. groups are usually glad to cooperate with Al-Anon. They may be willing to announce the formation of a new group when they make their own announcements at open A.A. meetings.

Public Outreach in the Community

Step Twelve

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Informing the public about Al-Anon and Alateen is vital to the growth of the fellowship. Good public relations are important to our groups as well as the community at large. It is important that members understand the principle of anonymity and how it applies when doing public outreach service. We always protect our members' anonymity, but the Al-Anon/Alateen *program* is not anonymous. (See "Anonymity" and "Public Outreach" in the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" section of the *Service Manual*.)

Groups can have members meet with spiritual leaders, healthcare providers, educators, or managers of local radio or television stations. Others may help bring the Al-Anon presence to a local hospital, rehabilitation center, or correctional facility. As long as members maintain personal anonymity when appearing in the media, as stated in Tradition Eleven, they can use their full names when contacting these professionals. Holding an open meeting to which com-

munity professionals are invited and placing Al-Anon and Alateen posters in public places are other ways to enhance Al-Anon's public relations.

Where there is a concentration of groups, groups can subscribe to an answering service to refer callers to the nearest group. As the groups grow, an Al-Anon Information Service (AIS or Intergroup) may be established. Many local newspapers have print and on-line listings of community resources, and the groups can make sure that Al-Anon/Alateen information is included. A phone listing under "Al-Anon" (using a number that is not a member's personal phone number) will help people find our fellowship.

Many groups participate in public outreach activities coordinated by their District, Area, and/or local Al-Anon Information Service (AIS). Local media outreach (TV, radio, print media, posters/other printed materials, and the internet) is handled by the District, Area, or AIS. Additional ideas for outreach projects are posted under the Members menu at al-anon.org. (See also the "Public Outreach" section of the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" for information on outreach by individuals and groups.)

Al-Anon and Alateen members can also share postings from the WSO social media pages; doing so does not disclose their membership in the program.

Keep your Area Public Outreach Coordinators informed of your outreach activities.

Personal and Group Sponsorship

"Sponsorship is a mutual and confidential sharing between two Al-Anon or Alateen members. A Sponsor is someone with whom a member can discuss personal problems or questions; someone who willingly shares the experience, strength, and hope of the Al-Anon/Alateen program" (from *Sponsorship, What It's All About* [P-31]).

Al-Anon Personal Sponsors

After a period of time, Al-Anon members will want to choose a personal Sponsor with whom they can identify. Members can encourage newcomers to find a Sponsor by sharing that Sponsors provide guidance; however, Sponsors do not direct or give advice. The new member may have discussed problems with a contact before coming to meetings. This contact may or may not be asked to con-

tinue as a Sponsor; however, neither a contact nor a newly-chosen Sponsor should be used as a substitute for a meeting. Additional information is published in the pamphlet *Sponsorship, What It's All About* (P-31), and in the bookmark *Sponsorship—Working Together to Recover* (M-78).

Service Sponsors

Service sponsorship is a special relationship where one member shares his/her service experience with another member. This type of sponsorship can be a one-time situation, such as an outgoing trusted servant supporting his/her replacement, or an ongoing relationship. Service sponsorship helps both the Service Sponsor and the sponsee acquire new skills while being an example of personal growth through service. Al-Anon Family Groups worldwide benefits when members are enthusiastic about service. For more information about service sponsorship, read the pamphlet *Service Sponsorship: Working Smarter, Not Harder* (P-88).

Alateen Group Sponsors

An Alateen Group Sponsor is an Al-Anon member who is currently certified by the Area process as an Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS), meets all of the Area's Requirements for service as an Alateen Group Sponsor, and has made a commitment to be of service to an Alateen meeting on a regular basis. (See "Alateen Policy" in the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" section of the *Service Manual*.)

Alateen Personal Sponsors

Just as Al-Anon members sponsor each other, Alateens sponsor each other. Alateen personal Sponsors are fellow Alateen members who can discuss personal problems or questions with those they sponsor. Personal Sponsors willingly share the experience, strength, and hope of the Alateen program. Al-Anon members do not sponsor individual Alateens.

Group Business

Group Records

Keeping group information up-to-date is vital to assuring that the most accurate meeting information is provided to persons seeking help in the Al-Anon and Alateen fellowship. Accurate records also

keep communication flowing between the group and the WSO, and the group and local service arms. It is essential that groups promptly report changes in their meeting location meeting day, time, CMA (Current Mailing Address), Group Representative (GR), or phone contacts to their Area Group Records Coordinator in writing. Group members can contact their District Representative (DR) to inquire about their Area's procedure to submit group changes. The Area Group Records Coordinator can provide group reports to verify that the information on file is current. The WSO can be informed by the Area or the group.

Group Business Meetings and Group Conscience

Tradition Two

For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants—they do not govern.

Group business meetings are held to share information and to include all group members in the activities and concerns of the group. Decisions a group makes are determined by an informed group conscience.

Group Business Meetings

Concept Twelve, Warranty Three: that all decisions be reached by discussion, vote and whenever possible by unanimity.

The group business meeting is an opportunity for members to share their ideas to increase group membership, express concerns, plan special meetings or projects and discuss other group business—such as changing the group name, Current Mailing Address (CMA), Group Phone Contacts, the meeting time and place, finances, meeting format, open or closed meeting status, District and Area matters and other topics suggested by members of the group.

Business meetings are also an opportunity to identify and discuss solutions to group problems such as: gossip; dominance; the need for additional group service positions; rotation of leadership; inappropriate behavior of a member and any other matter that affects group unity. The guiding principles for business meetings are the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of Service.

Groups are within their autonomy to determine how to conduct their group business and how to reach a group conscience. Some groups schedule business meetings on a regular basis and others

hold them as needed. Business meetings can be held before, after, or during the group meeting.

The manner in which a group business meeting is conducted and how to keep track of the group conscience decisions is as varied as the groups themselves.

Scheduling the meeting

Some groups schedule business meetings on a regular basis (monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly) and others hold them as needed. Business meetings can be held before, after or during the group meeting.

Planning the Meeting

It is beneficial to the group and promotes unity when members are aware of how to bring up their concerns or ideas to discuss at a business meeting. Announcing the date and time of the business meeting and the agenda topics and distributing pertinent information two or three weeks prior to the discussion and voting gives members of the group the opportunity to be informed, helps the group make better decisions and promotes group unity.

Conducting the Meeting

The group conscience decides who chairs the business meeting. The format for a group business meeting includes but is not limited to:

- an agenda
- length of time for discussion of each topic
- what percentage of the vote will reflect unanimity and/or a majority
- how the group conscience decisions will be recorded, etc.

Discussion of the topic(s)

Having a thorough discussion of the topic(s) in a principle-based manner, allowing all who choose to participate in the discussion to be heard and applying the Traditions and Concepts to each topic helps groups to reach informed group conscience decisions.

- If unanimity is not reached in the allotted timeframe of the meeting, discussions may continue at another time.
- Many groups use the guideline *Taking a Group Inventory* (G8a

& 8b) and the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) and the *Using Al-Anon Principles to Resolve Conflict Kit* (K-70) as resources when conducting a business meeting.

Voting at the meeting

Many groups request that only members who regularly attend the meeting vote at the group business meeting. Members who regularly attend more than one group may want to consider at which group to vote on District or Area matters, keeping in mind that our principles are spiritual and voting on an issue more than once could be viewed as trying to control or dominate the outcome.

Some larger meetings have a Business or Steering Committee that meets separately to prepare an agenda for the business meeting.

Group Conscience

The group conscience is the result of the group's business meeting discussions. The group conscience is the will of the group. The guiding principles for the group conscience are always the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of Service. It may be helpful for the group to review these principles prior to any group discussions. Some simple group decisions may be decided quickly; however, others may take time. It is by taking the time necessary to hear from all members who want to participate that a group conscience evolves.

In order to make an informed group conscience decision, members need access to all the information about the issue they are being asked to discuss, they need clarity on what their discussions hope to accomplish, and they are asked to trust each other's motives and capabilities. By sharing information as equals, taking time for discussion, and maintaining principles above personalities during the discussions, groups are often able to reach unanimity in their decisions. If unanimity is not reached in the allotted timeframe of the meeting, discussions may continue at another time. Once a group conscience decision is made, the entire group supports the decision.

Concept Five tells us that members have the right of appeal. If a member disagrees with the outcome of a group conscience decision, they have the right to submit an appeal for reconsideration back to the body that made the decision. After an appeal is heard, regardless of whether the decision is maintained or altered, the individual accepts the group conscience.

Group Inventory

Taking an inventory of the group helps to keep it healthy and invigorated. Groups are encouraged to make a periodic review using the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Service as the guiding principles for the inventory. Members can use the inventory to discuss new service opportunities and address minor or major concerns before the group's unity is disrupted. The guideline *Taking a Group Inventory* (G-8a & 8b) is a useful service tool that can aid in this process. (All guidelines are available under the Members menu at al-anon.org.)

Group Problems and Solutions

The "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) is a compilation of the World Service Conference's group conscience on how to resolve many group questions or problems.

Al-Anon and Alateen members expect a safe and pleasant environment when they attend a meeting, and when one member causes unrest due to inappropriate or intimidating behavior, the entire group could be affected. Groups are within their autonomy to establish group behavioral guidelines in a manner that reflects their group conscience and abides by the Traditions, as long as they do not impact another group, Al-Anon or A.A. as a whole.

Some members may discuss specific religious tenets, forgetting that membership is open to all. One or two members may dominate the group, ignoring the principles of rotation in leadership. Some members may talk about what they hear in meetings, violating our principles of anonymity and confidentiality. The spiritual principle of anonymity suggests that each member should be able to feel confident that nothing said in the meeting will be repeated, by a Sponsor or other members*—that every Al-Anon/Alateen member feels bound to keep in strict confidence any personal matter heard at a meeting or from an individual.

When the behavior of any member impacts the group, members apply the Traditions to the problem, and determine how best to approach the individual(s) involved, to ask the member to change the behavior in question. This can be an exercise in applying Al-Anon principles so that the message is not a personal attack, but rather

*It is important to remember that Al-Anon/Alateen meetings are not above the law. Members need to exercise care in sharing information that could require outside reporting to local, state, provincial, and national authorities.

a request based on what is best for the Al-Anon group. The *Using Al-Anon Principles to Resolve Conflicts Kit* (K-70) is a service tool designed to aid members and groups to resolve conflict in a principle-based manner. The “Three Obstacles to Success in Al-Anon” are: discussion of religion, gossip, and dominance. Study of this passage from the pamphlet *Alcoholism, the Family Disease* (P-4) has helped many groups deal with these group problems. (The passage is reprinted under “Optional Readings” in the “Suggested Meeting Outline.”)

The books *Al-Anon’s Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions* (B-8), *How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics* (B-32), and *Paths to Recovery—Al-Anon’s Steps, Traditions and Concepts* (B-24), give detailed suggestions on the application of the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Service to solve group problems.

Lack of money may handicap the group, or its excess cause disagreements. See the pamphlet *Seventh Tradition* (S-21) and the *Reserve Fund Guideline* (G-41) for suggestions about handling group funds. Both are posted under the Members menu at al-anon.org.

Taking a group inventory, rededicating the group to its primary purpose, studying the Traditions and Concepts of Service as they apply to the problem at hand, and seeking the experience, strength, and hope of other local groups, perhaps at District meetings, are all good methods of overcoming group difficulties. (See the *Taking a Group Inventory Guideline* [G-8a & 8b] that is posted under the Members menu at al-anon.org.)

Participation of members in group activities is important. This creates real involvement with the group and solidifies the relationship of the individual member to the group. Since each group has only a limited number of officers, it is best to have a policy of rotation, rather than have one member hold office for long periods of time. Other assignments may involve public outreach, bringing the refreshments for a limited period, setting up, and cleaning up. Reimbursement for refreshments from group funds is made by the Treasurer. The more service opportunities available, the more members will participate and feel themselves to be an integral and important part of the group. Concept Four reminds us that “Participation is the key to harmony.”

Group Reports and Announcements

Trusted Servants' Reports

The Chairperson may call on the Secretary or another trusted servant to read announcements from other Al-Anon service arms, including those sent to the group's CMA (Current Mailing Address) from the WSO via postal mail and email. The Treasurer or another trusted servant is asked to read the WSO Quarterly Appeal Letters and give the group a report on income and expenditures.

Periodically the Group Representative (GR) can update the group about District or Assembly meetings; however, at each meeting, the GR can share an item of interest from *The Forum*, *In the Loop*, or the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27). The GR can also keep the group informed about Al-Anon worldwide with interesting items from the *World Service Conference Summary* (P-46)*. A free copy of the Conference Summary can be ordered for the cost of postage or viewed under the Members menu at al-anon.org. The Information Service Representative (ISR) can also report the activities of the local AIS or Intergroup back to the group.

Other Group Announcements

Tradition Six

Our Family Groups ought never endorse, finance or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim. Although a separate entity, we should always co-operate with Alcoholics Anonymous.

Generally, those events put on by or connected to Al-Anon service arms are announced at meetings, in our newsletters and on local websites.

At an Al-Anon or Alateen meeting or meeting location, groups do not announce, publicize or discuss activities of other Twelve Step programs, as this could create an appearance of affiliation or endorsement, even if the event or activity is composed primarily of Al-Anon or Alateen members.

While we remain a separate entity from A.A., we cooperate whenever possible as a reflection of our special relationship with Alcoholics Anonymous. When Al-Anon participates in an A.A. event with speakers or workshops, these events may be announced at Al-Anon

*Currently available in English only.

and Alateen meetings. (See “Announcing Events” in the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies” section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* [P-24/27].)

Note that in order to use the name “Alateen,” any event with Alateen participation must have a connection to the Al-Anon Area in which it is held and have event requirements that meet or exceed the Area’s Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements.

Group Finances/Budget

Tradition Seven

Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

In keeping with Tradition Seven, a group’s membership is the source of its funds. Assistance from sources outside of Al-Anon or Alateen violates this Tradition. There are no dues or fees to attend Al-Anon or Alateen meetings. Supporting Al-Anon and Alateen groups financially is a way for members to express their gratitude for the help they have received from the program, thus ensuring that Al-Anon and Alateen will be available when someone seeks recovery from living with the effects of alcoholism.

Group funds are used to support Al-Anon’s purpose of carrying its message of help and hope to those who still suffer. Group contributions support all levels of Al-Anon service including the District, the local Al-Anon Information Service (AIS/Intergroup), the Area, and the World Service Office (WSO).

Groups are within their autonomy to create a financial budget to plan for the purchase of literature, refreshments, the group’s trusted servants’ expenses to attend business meetings, purchasing Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism as a public outreach project and contributions to the service arms. Some groups take additional collections for special local projects within the District or Area. If necessary, groups can add to the voluntary contributions by having fund-raising events. (See “Financial Matters” in the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies” section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*.)

Warranty One

That only sufficient operating funds, including an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle.

The spiritual principle of prudence suggests that groups avoid accumulating money beyond current needs and a small but ample reserve, with just enough funds to pay the GR expenses to Assembly

and group expenses for a couple of months. This can be decided by making an informed group conscience decision. (See *Reserve Fund Guideline* [G-41].)

Group expenses may include:

- Rent (may include insurance) for a meeting place.
- Group Representative's expenses to attend and participate at District and Area Assembly meetings.
- Al-Anon Information Service (AIS/Intergroup) Representative's (ISR) expenses to attend and participate at AIS meetings.
- Conference Approved Literature, including Al-Anon and Alateen books and pamphlets for sale to members. Most groups offer lower-priced pamphlets and leaflets to newcomers and members at no charge.
- Miscellaneous expenses agreed to by the group conscience such as babysitting, public outreach activities, refreshments, etc.

The group supports Al-Anon/Alateen financially at all levels of service by contributing to:

- Their District, Al-Anon Information Service (AIS/Intergroup), and World Service Area (state/province) Structure that serves the group
- The World Service Office, which serves all groups. (In keeping with Tradition Seven, support of the World Service Office is the responsibility of all Al-Anon members, groups, and service arms.)*

Considerations regarding Group Finances

- In keeping with Traditions Six and Seven, the group does not provide financial aid to members in need or to any outside enterprise. Individuals are free to help others in need as they choose; however, it is always without involving Al-Anon's name or other group members.
- If a group is not able to support the service levels due to excessive meeting expenses, it may wish to reconsider its choice of meeting locations. A group is discouraged from giving all of its funds to an outside entity, such as a clubhouse, even as a condition of using the meeting room. Al-Anon groups are not responsible to support a clubhouse, other than paying rent. Likewise, electronic meetings pay rent to the website

*In countries with a national office, groups support their General Service Office (GSO and the WSO).

that hosts them but are not otherwise responsible to support the website.

- A group may need to periodically review its budget as changes to meeting expenses occur, such as a rent increase, a change in attendance or an increase in member donations, funding a group public outreach activity, etc.

The Quarterly Appeal Letter from the WSO provides individual members the opportunity to participate in Twelfth Step work worldwide. The letter is sent to the CMA (Current Mailing Address) of the groups in the World Service Conference Structure in February, May, August, and November (and to groups worldwide in November). It is requested that the letter be read at two successive meetings, and followed by a special collection. This again is an opportunity for members to contribute in gratitude for what Al-Anon/Alateen has given them. Some groups choose to add an additional contribution to the collection. Some Areas, Al-Anon Information Services, and Districts may also send an appeal letter to the groups

Individual members may contribute directly to the WSO. (See “Financial Matters” in the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies.”)

Group Bank Accounts

Al-Anon and Alateen groups are not required to have a bank account; however, based on their group conscience decision, some groups choose to have them. In order to make an informed group conscience decision, it is recommended that members be provided with all the information pertaining to the bank account, including fees and disclosure requirements.

It’s important to note that individual Al-Anon and Alateen groups are part of Al-Anon Family Groups, the fellowship, and have no legal status. They are not considered to be tax-exempt organizations as they are not branches or chapters of the Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. (the World Service Office). The WSO cannot share its not-for-profit number with local groups because the WSO has no authority over local group funds. Al-Anon and Alateen groups are autonomous in their financial matters. (See “Incorporation and Taxes” in the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies” section of the *Service Manual*.)

Al-Anon and Alateen groups in the US that choose to have a bank account are required to obtain a Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service for the bank to

keep on file. The EIN does not give legal status to the group, it does not make them “tax-exempt,” and it is not to be confused with the WSO ID number.

The trusted servant applying for the EIN and/or the bank account may be required to submit their personal information (full name, address, and social security number). A member needs to be sure that he or she is comfortable with disclosing this information on behalf of an AI-Anon group. It is suggested that group bank accounts have at least two signatures on every check and that two to four members are authorized to access the account.

Canadian banks may require similar documentation from the Canadian Revenue Agency to obtain a community bank account.

It is not recommended that group funds be deposited into a member’s personal account (or a new personal account using a member’s social security number), as such accounts legally belong to the member, not the group, and accurate record-keeping could be difficult. If the member becomes incapacitated or ill, the group might not be able to access the account. In the event of the member’s death, the account becomes part of the member’s estate and the group could lose its funds.

Banking requirements may vary in other countries and groups must comply with local banking requirements and regulations.

Please contact the WSO for additional information.

Insurance

Many meeting places require liability insurance and/or “hold harmless” waivers from AI-Anon and Alateen groups. The US and Canadian laws do not allow for the WSO to provide blanket insurance coverage for groups and service arms. Groups requiring this coverage are encouraged to first contact their District, AI-Anon Information Service (AIS) or Area as there are some that can provide liability coverage for groups. Where this is not the case, several groups that meet at one place might be able to combine their resources and obtain one policy. Laws differ from place to place and it is suggested that groups contact someone in their locale regarding liability insurance. Paying for insurance should not jeopardize the group’s ability to fulfill the spirit of the Traditions and support the AI-Anon and Alateen service arms. If a group is not able to take care of its immediate needs, it may need to reconsider its choice of meeting locations.

When a Group Disbands

If a group no longer meets, the procedure to disband the group is that a member of the group contacts their District Representative (DR), Area Group Records Coordinator and/or the WSO to become informed of the steps to remove meeting information from local meeting lists and local, Area and WSO websites. The DR can also suggest ways of disbursing remaining group funds and literature in keeping with our Traditions.

Group Service Positions

Tradition Two

For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants—they do not govern.

Suggested Duties of Group Officers/Leaders

Group officers rotate regularly. Rotation gives all members the privilege of serving. Officers/leaders are trusted servants; they do not govern the group. Groups may attain more participation by electing alternates to the group service positions. Depending on group size and format, the group may choose not to fill all positions listed.

Chairperson/Leader:

- Opens the meeting by reading the Preamble or the Welcome and leads the group in reciting the Serenity Prayer; follows the group's meeting format.
- Introduces speakers or announces the subject of the meeting.
- Invites members to take part.

Program Chairperson:

- Asks a member to chair the meeting.
- Plans meetings. (See "Meeting Ideas.")

Secretary:

- Handles group correspondence.
- Notifies their Area Group Records Coordinator or the WSO of any changes of the group, GR, and/or CMA mailing address, as well as phone numbers of group contacts.
- May pick up the mail from the post office box (if applicable) or serve as the CMA (Current Mailing Address).
- Keeps an up-to-date list of members, and their phone numbers.

- Makes necessary Al-Anon-related announcements at meetings.
- Orders Conference Approved Literature in sufficient quantities to supply the group's needs (if the group does not have a Literature Chairperson)
- Encourages support of Alateen by providing information regarding Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) certification until the group elects a Group Representative.

Treasurer:

- Maintains the group's financial records in a manner that reflects the group conscience. Some groups have an actual budget that includes periodic contributions to the District, local Al-Anon Information Service, Area Assembly, and World Service Office. (See "Group Finances/Budget.")
- Passes the collection basket at group meetings.
- Asks another member to help count and record the collection.
- Reads the Quarterly Appeal Letter and passes around the accompanying collection envelope to the group at two consecutive meetings.
- Submits a financial statement to the group at regular intervals.

CMA (Current Mailing Address):

- Receives postal and electronic group mail.
- Brings the mail to the group. (See "Considerations when Starting an Al-Anon or Alateen Group.")

Group Phone Contact for the Public:

- Receives calls from newcomers seeking Al-Anon's help or others seeking directions or additional information about the meeting.

Group Representative* (GR):

- Acts as liaison between the group and the District and between the group and the Assembly.
- Becomes familiar with the current edition of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) and encourages its use among group members.

*Al-Anon and Alateen members who are also members of A.A. may not serve as GR or Alternate GR. See "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies," "Service Participation by Members of Al-Anon Family Groups Who Are also Members of Alcoholics Anonymous"

- Works through the District in helping to initiate public outreach projects.
- Encourages Alateen sponsorship in accordance with Area Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements.
- Serves as local representative of their group language Al-Anon/Alateen magazine, *The Forum*, *Al-Anon y Alateen en acción*, or *Le lien* by:
 - Acquainting members with its usefulness.
 - Suggesting personal subscriptions.
 - Submitting group subscriptions to the WSO.
 - Encouraging members to write articles.
- Is elected for a three-year term.
- Encourages election of an Alternate GR*.

Information Service Representative* (ISR):

- Attends meetings of the Al-Anon Information Service (AIS/Intergroup).
- Acts as liaison between the group and the AIS.
- Reports AIS activities to the group.
- The Alternate GR may serve as the ISR, and the GR serve as the Alternate ISR.*

Greeter:

- Makes sure that all attendees are welcomed, particularly those new to the group.
- Gives literature and meeting schedules to all newcomers. (Many groups also provide newcomers with the softcover *How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics* [B-32]).

Hospitality:

- Sets up refreshments if the group provides them.
- Makes sure meeting area is cleaned up after the meeting.

Business or Steering Committee:

- Deals with questions of policy and local public outreach.
- Deals with any internal problems that arise between the group's regular business meetings.

*Al-Anon and Alateen members who are also members of A.A. may not serve as GR or Alternate GR. See "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies," "Service Participation by Members of Al-Anon Family Groups Who Are also Members of Alcoholics Anonymous."

Resources for Members and Groups

AI-Anon Websites

Many AI-Anon Areas, Districts, and Information Services have established websites for public outreach and member information. The WSO website is a resource for AI-Anon and Alateen members, professionals and the public.

The WSO Website (al-anon.org)

This website includes information for AI-Anon and Alateen members, newcomers, professionals and the media such as:

- AI-Anon and Alateen meeting searches physical and electronic (digital, social media and phone, and Alateen chat) meetings
- A comprehensive directory of contact information for Areas, AI-Anon Information Services (AISs) and General Service Offices (GSOs)
- Digital publications including the *AI-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27), *AI-Anon/Alateen Guidelines* and *World Service Conference Summaries**
- Group and electronic meeting registration/update forms
- WSO financial information
- Online Store* for purchasing AI-Anon Conference Approved Literature (CAL)
- Public outreach materials including the AI-Anon Faces Alcoholism magazine, press releases and samples from CAL, *The Forum*, *AI-Anon y Alateen en acción*, and *Le lien*
- Audio podcasts*, Teen Corner and the latest news from the WSO)

Guidelines Relevant to Groups

The shared experiences of AI-Anon and Alateen members on various topics have been compiled and published by the World Service Office (WSO) and can be found under the Members menu at al-anon.org.

Guidelines that may be helpful to groups include:

- *Members Interested in Speaking* (G-1)
- *Beginners' Meeting* (G-2)

*Currently available in English only.

- *Cooperation Between Al-Anon and A.A.* (G-3)
- *Taking a Group Inventory* (G-8a & G-8b)
- *Outreach to the Public* (G-10)
- *Group Representatives* (G-11)
- *How to Start an Al-Anon Group* (G-12)
- *Suggested Programs for Meetings* (G-13)
- *Starting an Alateen Group* (G-19)
- *The Open Al-Anon Meeting* (G-27)
- *Outreach to Professionals* (G-29)
- *Ordering Literature* (G-31)
- *Alateen Safety Guidelines* (G-34)
- *Electronic Al-Anon Meeting Guideline* (G-39)
- *Guideline for Al-Anon Websites* (G-40)
- *Reserve Fund Guideline* (G-41) (contains information about group budgets, etc.)

Newsletters/Timely Publications

- *In the Loop*, *En Contacto*, and *Le Messager* contain timely news and announcements from the World Service Office (WSO). These electronic communications are announced at least monthly to the group's CMA (Current Mailing Address).
- *The Forum*, Al-Anon/Alateen's monthly magazine, contains recovery stories from members, as well as news and information from the World Service Office. *The Forum* provides meeting topics as well as a meeting anytime, anywhere. Forms to submit sharings are available under the Members menu at al-anon.org.
- *Alateen Talk* is Alateen's quarterly newsletter, distributed to all registered Alateen groups and by subscription. Alateen members share their recovery and Alateen Group Sponsors share their experiences in Alateen service. Sharing sheets are mailed with every issue and are posted on the Members menu at al-anon.org.

Literature and Service Materials

Al-Anon/Alateen literature and service materials help members to continue their recovery between meetings and gain insight into themselves and the principles of the Al-Anon/Alateen program. Conference Approved Literature (CAL) is written by and for our members and goes through a thorough review process by numerous Al-Anon members to assure that it conveys the program in a

consistent and comprehensive manner. Samples from CAL are posted on al-anon.org.

Al-Anon/Alateen service tools help members to conduct the business of Al-Anon/Alateen in a healthy, productive way. Many service tools, including all of the Al-Anon/Alateen Guidelines, the *Service Manual*, and outreach materials are available under the Members menu at al-anon.org to download and print as needed. Other outreach materials are available at very low cost. A complete *Al-Anon/Alateen Conference Approved Literature and Service Materials* catalog (S-15) is mailed annually to every Al-Anon/Alateen group.

Most Al-Anon-produced materials, including CAL, *The Forum* and *Alateen Talk*, are appropriate to use and share at Al-Anon/Alateen meetings. Members are always free to read other publications, but only Al-Anon/Alateen materials are used in Al-Anon/Alateen meetings. This ensures that our program message stays consistent with our principles. (See "Conference Approved Literature and Service Tools/Materials" in the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" section of the *Service Manual*.)

Structure of the Al-Anon/ Alateen Fellowship (Links of Service)

The links of service may vary around the world. Each structure organizes the groups according to the needs of the structure.

In addition to the definitions of basic terms found in this section, more information about service positions is in the "World Service Handbook" section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27). Guidelines are additional resources and are posted under the Members menu at al-anon.org.

Groups

The foundation of the Al-Anon Family Groups structure is the membership. The basic unit is the Al-Anon or Alateen group, which may consist of any two or more individuals coming together for mutual help.

The group's operations are the responsibility of a set of officers/leaders, who are elected by the members. Officers/leaders are usually changed every six months so that everyone has an opportunity to serve the group. These officers/leaders, depending on the size of

the group, may be the Secretary and the Chairperson. In time, the group may need a Treasurer, Program Chairperson, and other group officers listed in this publication.

The Group Representative* (GR), an officer as well, is elected for a three-year term and represents the group's concerns and wishes at the District and Area, as well as informing the group of what is happening in Al-Anon in the District, Area, and worldwide. GRs are entrusted with the "right of decision" to vote on behalf of the group according to their conscience and the good of Al-Anon as a whole. (See the "Concepts of Service" section of the *Service Manual* and the guidelines *Group Representative* [G-11].) GRs and other officers are leaders and trusted servants who perform their duties in keeping with the Traditions and Concepts of Service, yet they have no authority over the group. Their functions are described under the heading of "Suggested Duties of Group Officers/Leaders."

There are two major lines of communication between the individual group and Al-Anon and Alateen as a whole. The first is the World Service Conference that directly serves Al-Anon and Alateen groups in the US and Canada (including Bermuda and Puerto Rico), and groups and structures in other countries (whose voice is heard through the International Coordination Committee). The second is the clearinghouse known as the World Service Office (WSO), headquarters of the Al-Anon Family Groups, which acts as the service center for groups throughout the world and is the link with other national General Service Offices (GSOs), several of which have their own Conferences.

Districts

The District is the first link from the groups to the Area, the WSO, and the World Service Conference. Districts are comprised of a number of groups within a geographical part of a city, state, or province that meet as needed. The Group Representatives (GRs) from the groups in this geographical area attend the District meetings to represent their group. An Overlay District is a collection of groups typically aligned by language. Groups may belong to either the District or Overlay District based on their group conscience. Decisions may be made on holding local functions, doing local outreach, and news will be disseminated to and from the groups.

*Al-Anon and Alateen members who are also members of A.A. may not serve as GR or Alternate GR. See "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies," "Service Participation by Members of Al-Anon Family Groups Who Are also Members of Alcoholics Anonymous."

Each District elects a District Representative (DR), who may visit the groups and represents their voice at Area World Service Committee meetings. Each District may have officers and coordinators to help the District carry the message. The District and its officers are a resource to their groups and may be called upon to resolve questions or problems. For more information on Districts and District meetings, see the “World Service Handbook” section.

AI-Anon Information Service (AIS/Intergroups)

An AI-Anon Information Service, also known as an Intergroup, is a local service established and maintained by one or more Districts or by groups located close enough to one another for easy access and communication. Geographical boundaries need not be observed unless one Information Service conflicts with another nearby, in which case a geographical division is set by mutual agreement.

An AI-Anon Information Service usually performs the following functions:

- Maintains a listing in the local phone directory so that those seeking information about AI-Anon and Alateen can easily find it.
- Maintains a post office box or an office address for listing with the World Service Office.
- Receives postal mail, email, and phone inquiries, and forwards them to the appropriate group for response or follow-up.
- In cooperation with Area Group Records Coordinator, updates, publishes, and distributes lists of group meetings in their local area.
- Plans and conducts program-exchange meetings where the groups’ Chairpersons or Program Chairpersons exchange teams of speakers for a scheduled period.
- Serves as an avenue for local public outreach service, which is channeled through the Districts whenever possible.
- May maintain a stock of Conference Approved Literature (CAL), and may register with the WSO as a Literature Distribution Center (LDC) to sell CAL.*
- May maintain a website that is linked to their Area website.
- Holds periodic meetings attended by all the Information Service Representatives where activity reports, including a financial update, are made and matters regarding the groups are discussed.

*The WSO will also register LDCs that operate separately from the local Information Service.

- Prints and distributes its own newsletter of local Al-Anon/Alateen activities for the groups that support it.

AIS phone numbers and mailing addresses are published in local directories, meeting lists, and on websites. In keeping with Tradition Eleven, AISs do not use personal numbers or addresses of any Al-Anon member. In this way, potential members may be referred without revealing the name, address, or phone number of any Al-Anon or Alateen member and personal anonymity is maintained.

Any local Al-Anon or Alateen group may agree to support an Information Service but joining is purely voluntary. The Information Service is supported by the groups it serves within its geographical boundaries; it should not seek or accept support outside that area. Contributions are voluntary and are not a condition of membership.

The guidelines *Al-Anon Information Services (G-4)*, *Literature Distribution Centers (G-18)* and *Guideline for Al-Anon Websites (G-40)** are posted under the Members menu at al-anon.org.

Al-Anon Information Service Representation

Experience has shown that the Information Service can be a function of Districts, providing a network of communication. It is suggested that the Alternate Group Representative** serve as the Information Service Representative (ISR) and the GR** serve as the Alternate Information Service Representative. In addition, the Alternate District Representative may be a member of the AIS board, and the DR generally serves as the Alternate Information Service Board member. AISs send a representative, called an Al-Anon Information Service Liaison (AISL), to Area World Service Committee and Assembly meetings.

Areas

Areas are comprised of groups and Districts in a specific geographical space, usually an entire state or province. Every group in the Area has a voice and a vote in Area business through their Group Representative (GR). Each Area in the US and Canada is represented at the annual World Service Conference by an Area Delegate, elected every three years by the GRs. Other Area officers include an Alternate Delegate, Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer. Area Coordinators serve as a link between the WSO departments and local

*Currently available in English only.

**Al-Anon and Alateen members who are also members of A.A. may not serve as GR or Alternate GR. See "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies," "Service Participation by Members of Al-Anon Family Groups Who Are also Members of Alcoholics Anonymous."

trusted servants. Area Coordinators may include: Alateen; Archives; Public Outreach; Literature; Area Newsletter; Area Alateen Process Person; *The Forum*, *Al-Anon y Alateen en acción* or *Le lien*; Web; and Group Records. All Area officers and coordinators are important links in the chain of service, and a resource to the groups and Districts in their Area.

Area Assembly

The Area Assembly is the business meeting where the groups send their representatives to express a voice and vote on behalf of the group. During an Assembly, the Delegate reports the activities of the World Service Conference. An Assembly can meet at least one or two times a year, or a minimum of once every three years. Many meet more often.

Area World Service Committee

In between Assemblies, Area World Service Committee (AWSC) meetings are held, attended by the Assembly officers, all District Representatives and Al-Anon Information Service Liaisons, and the Area Coordinators of special services. At these meetings, the Assembly agenda is planned, information and reports are conveyed, and decisions may be made that cannot wait until the next Assembly.

World Service Conference (WSC)

See also “World Service Handbook” section in the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* [P-24/27].

The World Service Conference (WSC) is an annual meeting of the elected Delegates from each of the Areas of the World Service Conference Structure, the Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee, and World Service Office Conference Staff.* Through the discussions and deliberations at the WSC, the active voice and effective group conscience of Al-Anon is heard on world service matters.

Delegate members attending the WSC are chosen at Area Assemblies by the groups through a series of elections. Having been elected in this democratic manner, they are entrusted by the group conscience, in accordance with Concept Three, to make decisions for the fellowship worldwide.

*See the policy regarding “Service Participation by Members of Al-Anon Family Groups Who Are also Members of Alcoholics Anonymous” in the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies” section of the *Service Manual*.

From the Group to the WSC

Each Al-Anon and Alateen group elects a **Group Representative** (GR) and in this way connects to Al-Anon worldwide, as described in Concept One. The GR attends District meetings, where problems are discussed and information is exchanged. A District is one segment of an Assembly Area in a state or a province. GRs elect a **District Representative** (DR) to represent the District at the Area World Service Committee (AWSC) meetings.

DRs and GRs are expected to attend meetings of the Assembly whenever its Chairperson calls them. Once every three years, at the Assembly, the eligible GRs elect a **Delegate** to the WSC for the ensuing three years.

This succession of elected links gives each Al-Anon and Alateen group a voice in the WSC. The same links provide a continuous chain of communication for the flow of information between the groups, Districts, Assemblies, World Service Conference (WSC), and the World Service Office. When Conference decisions are made, the same communication chain carries the information back from the Delegate, to the Assembly, to the AWSC, to the District Representative, to the Group Representative, and to the group members. A group that fails to have a Group Representative denies its members a voice and causes a break in the link of communications. A comprehensive summary of each annual WSC, usually held in April, is available to all members under the Members menu at al-anon.org. A free printed copy can be ordered for the cost of postage.

As Al-Anon developed in countries outside the World Service Conference Structure, members organized service structures to serve their groups. Representatives from national General Service structures are invited to attend the WSC with voice but no vote, since those representatives vote at their own National Service Conferences.

World Service Office (WSO)

In other countries, service is often provided by a national General Service Office (GSO) which is linked to the WSO through the International Coordination Committee. Each structure organizes the groups according to the needs of the structure.

(See also the “World Service Handbook” in the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* [P-24/27].)

As the principal service center of the fellowship, the WSO acts in

conformity with the wishes of the Conference. It publishes all **Conference Approved Literature** (CAL). Many functions and activities of the fellowship circulate through this office. It is the center, not the head; it serves, but does not control or direct. The relationship of the WSO to the groups is fully explained in “Al-Anon’s Twelve Concepts of Service.”

Work at the WSO is done by a paid Staff, some of whom are Al-Anon members. They take care of the huge volume of creative and administrative work involved in implementing the decisions of the WSO, as well as routine matters.

New groups are provided support in their early attempts to become established. Correspondence is maintained with the thousands of groups in the fellowship. Members all over the world are encouraged to form new groups.

The **Board of Trustees**, which meets quarterly, is the legal entity responsible for operational oversight of Al-Anon’s funds and services. Its service arm, the **Executive Committee**, which meets monthly, is delegated by the Board to make routine management decisions required in the interim between Board meetings.

WSO Committees

WSO committees are vital to Al-Anon Family Groups. Since Al-Anon’s earliest days, they have provided input, feedback, and creative ideas to assist the Board of Trustees in its efforts to lead Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. WSO committees use the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making Process to Reach an Informed Group Conscience (KBDM).^{*}These committees always fit into the overall context—never acting as a separate entity, always sharing the work of the Board, but aware of the limits of their decisions.

Some of the work handled by the WSO’s traditional committees has been moved to “work groups,” “thought forces,” or “task forces,” which report back to their originating bodies.

Here are the current definitions:

- A WSO **committee** is formed by the Board of Trustees and responds to an ongoing need of Al-Anon Family Groups. While it does not manage or conduct the active affairs of the service department it is related to (such as Public Outreach, Literature, etc.), it may make recommendations about Summary, available on the Members menu at al-anon.org any work the depart-

For a detailed explanation of KBDM, see the 2008 World Service Conference Summary, available on the Members menu at al-anon.org.

ment is doing or considering. It is often thought to be a permanent part of an organization. It can be an originating body and a thought force or task force may evolve from a committee.

- A **work group** is a unit of people established to meet an ongoing need of the originating body. It can be considered a permanent part of the organization which has formed it. It can be an originating body and a thought force or task force may evolve from a work group. The objective is to complete its activity and present it to the originating body to move forward.
- A **thought force** is a temporary unit of people established to brainstorm ideas and to develop strategies on a single defined task or activity. It uses the resources available such as perspective of members of the thought force and Staff knowledge. For example, a problem identified could be a lack of clarity regarding roles. Strategies that are suggested might include writing job descriptions (the idea, not the actual job description); components of a guideline; or adding text to a portion of the *Service Manual* to clarify. The objective is to identify the potential idea not to write the actual text itself. The thought force is not expected to have all the answers or to provide the final solutions. If there are facts that are unknown, they can be flagged in the KBDM question, "Things we don't know but wish we did." A thought force may lay the foundation for the work of a task force. Sometimes they offer recommendations resulting from their findings. A thought force presents its information to the originating body to move forward. Thought forces are "thinkers," not "doers."
- A **task force** is a temporary unit of people established to work on a single defined task or activity. It uses available resources such as perspective of members of the task force and Staff knowledge. For example, a task could be to choose one of the suggested strategies from the thought force. If the task force chooses writing job descriptions, for example, then it would write the job descriptions. The objective is to complete the job description and present it to the originating body to move forward. A task force may fulfill the recommendations made by a thought force. Task forces are the "doers."

None of these groups is a decision-making body, but they may make recommendations. Each body's objective is to complete its activity and present it to the originating body, to move forward.

Reaching consensus on WSO committees, work groups, task forces, and thought forces is done in the same manner as it is done at the group level. Members need access to all the information about the issue, they need clarity in what their discussions hope to accomplish, and they trust each other's motives and capabilities. Committee decisions take time, but it is necessary to take the time to hear from all members who want to participate so that a group conscience evolves. Each member puts forth his or her ideas, willing to sacrifice them, believing that the best outcome will come from the discussion.

Some committees meet regularly while others meet on an as-needed basis, all with the underlying goal to spread the message of Al-Anon to all those who need it. Individual committees seek consensus in order to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The Executive Committee oversees day-to-day operations of the WSO including services to members, groups, and electronic meetings. The Finance and Policy Committees have agendas specific to these matters, while Literature and Public Outreach make recommendations pertinent to current issues in these areas. Finding new ways to serve the Alateen membership is the job of the Alateen Advisory Committee. Maintaining adherence to the principles of the program in *The Forum* is the role of the *Forum* Editorial Advisory Committee. The International Coordination Committee (ICC) handles all issues related to groups and General Service Offices (GSOs) outside the World Service Conference (WSC) Structure. The ICC provides the connection between the GSOs and the WSC Structure.

Basic Terms Used in Al-Anon Service

See the "World Service Handbook" section of the Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27) for a fuller explanation. In countries outside of the World Service Conference Structure, service terms and structures vary according to their needs.

The individual member usually thinks of Al-Anon/Alateen as the group to which he or she belongs. Yet that single group is one of thousands that meet in all parts of the world trying to cope with the same problems faced by others.

An understanding of the whole Al-Anon picture will show the important role played by each individual in the overall work of the Al-Anon/Alateen fellowship.

Groups

The **group** is the basic service unit, where close personal interchanges among members take place, where Al-Anon ideas are discussed and applied to personal problems. The entire Al-Anon/Alateen fellowship structure exists for the sole purpose of helping the group members. Every member has the right to participate in the group. To ensure growth, members welcome opportunities to be useful to the group, to accept group offices, to support those members who do the work of the group, and to stand ready at all times to comfort and help others affected by the family disease of alcoholism address their common problems. **Physical groups** meet in geographic locations. They are eligible to elect a Group Representative based on that geographic location. **Electronic meetings** meet digitally (voice, written, text, video), through social media or on the phone without geographic restrictions.

Home Group: The **home group** is the group a member attends regularly and commits to participate, vote and give service. It is frequently the strongest support for an Al-Anon member since relationships tend to be developed through close and regular contact.

Group Representative (GR)*: an Al-Anon or Alateen member who represents the group at District and Area Assembly meetings, where they share information of importance. The GR brings that information back to the group.

CMA: The Current Mailing Address receives the group mail from the WSO and takes it to the group. (See “CMA” under “Considerations When Starting an Al-Anon or Alateen Group.”)

Group Phone Contacts for the Public: Al-Anon members who are willing to receive calls from newcomers seeking Al-Anon’s help or others seeking directions or information about the Al-Anon meeting.

Al-Anon Personal Sponsor: an Al-Anon member with whom a member can confidentially discuss personal problems or questions and someone who willingly shares the experience, strength, and hope of the Al-Anon program.

Service Sponsor: an Al-Anon member involved in service who guides a member in applying the Traditions and Concepts of Service, and shares their experience, strength, and hope from giving service to Al-Anon.

*Al-Anon and Alateen members who are also members of A.A. may not serve as GR or Alternate GR. See “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies,” “Service Participation by Members of Al-Anon Family Groups Who Are also Members of Alcoholics Anonymous.”

Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS): an Al-Anon member who is currently certified through their Area Alateen process and is therefore eligible to be directly responsible for Alateens while being of service to Alateen, including service as an instant or temporary Alateen Group Sponsor.

Alateen Group Sponsor: an Al-Anon member who is currently certified by their Area process as an Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service and has made a commitment to be of service to an Alateen meeting on a regular basis.

Alateen Personal Sponsor: an Alateen member with whom another Alateen can discuss personal problems or questions. Personal Sponsors willingly share the experience, strength, and hope of the Alateen program.

Districts

The **District** is a geographical segment containing a number of groups, located relatively close to one another. An **Overlay District** is a collection of groups typically aligned by language. Groups may belong to either the District or Overlay District based on their group conscience. Overlay Districts are formed upon approval by the Area. Group Representatives attend District meetings to discuss business matters and share their group experiences with each other.

District Representative (DR): is elected by the GRs from within their District. The DR chairs the District meetings, represents the groups in their District at Area World Service Committee meetings, and serves as a resource and information source for the groups.

Al-Anon Information Services/Intergroups

An **Al-Anon Information Service (AIS)** sometimes called an Intergroup, is a local service established by the groups and/or Districts within its geographical boundaries. It exists to aid the groups it serves in the common purpose of carrying the Al-Anon message to the families and friends of alcoholics. An AIS Liaison member links the AIS to the Area.

Al-Anon Information Service Liaison (AISL) members are appointed or elected by the Information Service/Intergroup to serve as the communication link between the Information Service and the Area Assembly/Area World Service Committee.

Literature Distribution Centers

A **Literature Distribution Center (LDC)** provides Al-Anon mem-

bers with local access and quick delivery of Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature, including books, pamphlets, booklets, kits, posters, and films, and other Al-Anon material.

Areas

The **Area** is made up of all the Districts in a state or a province (some large states/provinces are divided into more than one Area). Each Area is represented by one Delegate at the annual World Service Conference.

World Service Delegate: an Al-Anon/Alateen member elected at the Area Assembly to represent all the groups in his or her Area at the annual World Service Conference. The Delegate is the primary communication link between the groups and the World Service Office (WSO).

Assembly: the Area Assembly, composed of all the GRs in the Area, convenes at least every three years to elect a Delegate and other Assembly officers. Other Area business is conducted at interim Assembly meetings called by the Area Chairperson.

Area World Service Committee (AWSC): consists of the officers of the Assembly, District Representatives, Coordinators, and AIS Liaison members. They meet between Assemblies to plan the Assembly agenda and deal with other Area business, as needed.

Area Coordinators: coordinate the activities of their service (i.e., Alateen; Archives; Conventions; *The Forum*, *Al-Anon y Alateen en acción* or *Le lien*; Group Records; Literature; Public Outreach; and Website) in the Area and are a liaison between the Area World Service Committee (AWSC), other Area committees, and the groups. They convey service information from the WSO to the Districts, AISs, and groups. In order to perform their duties as a Coordinator, Area Alateen Coordinators must be certified as an Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) in the Area they serve.

Area Alateen Process Person (AAPP): serves as the Area's designated Alateen contact with the WSO Group Records Department regarding Alateen forms and processes all Alateen group and AMIAS information for the Area. The AAPP collaborates with the Area Alateen Coordinator and the Group Records Coordinator, as determined by the Area process, concerning the distribution and submission of Alateen forms and WSO Group Records reports. Based on their needs and autonomy, Areas may determine if the AAPP is required to be a certified AMIAS.

Area Newsletter Editor: performs a vital service by providing up-to-date information to the groups within the Area as guided by the AWSC World Service.

World Service

Conference Approved Literature (CAL): books, pamphlets and service tools conceptually approved by the World Service Conference (WSC) and written by and for AI-Anon and Alateen members. Once developed, this material undergoes a rigorous process of review established by the WSC to assure it is identifiably AI-Anon in content and feeling, and consistently reflects AI-Anon's principles. CAL is identifiable by the CAL seal.

Electronic Meetings: offer hope and comfort to relatives and friends of alcoholics through various electronic means.

Inmate Correspondence Service: a service that links incarcerated AI-Anon members with members who attend AI-Anon meetings regularly through letters that serve as a meeting.

Inmate Contact: an active member of AI-Anon who attends meetings regularly and is willing to share their AI-Anon program with an incarcerated member through written correspondence.

Lone Member*: an AI-Anon member who cannot attend AI-Anon meetings due to distance or disability. Lone members are encouraged to start AI-Anon meetings in their locale when feasible.

Lone Member Contact*: an active AI-Anon member who attends meetings regularly and is willing to share our AI-Anon Twelve Step recovery program through written correspondence with Lone Members.

TEAM (Together Empowering AI-Anon Members): a TEAM event is a partnership between an Area(s) and the World Service Office (WSO) with the aim of providing an opportunity for AI-Anon and Alateen members to learn more about service and the AI-Anon program. This is accomplished by the Area and a WSO Task Force working together to plan an agenda of workshops and presentations that address the Area's specific needs and expand members' understanding of our worldwide fellowship. TEAM events are sponsored by the Area(s) and the WSO.

*This service is no longer used in the World Service Conference (WSC) Structure; however, this Service may be functioning in worldwide General Service Offices or evolving structures that look to the WSC for guidance.

International

General Service Office (GSO): the term given to a national service structure in a country outside of the World Service Conference Structure. GSOs are linked to the World Service Office through the International Coordination Committee.

International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM): a biennial service meeting for General Service Offices/national service structures. The purpose of the IAGSM is to share the experience of Al-Anon national services around the world through its Delegates. It is not a decision-making body and passes any recommendations through the International Coordination Committee to the Board of Trustees. In addition to the International Coordination Committee members attending this meeting, the WSO Board of Trustees sends two Trustees, one from the United States and the other from Canada.

National service committee: a committee comprised of Al-Anon members that is authorized by the groups in a country outside of the World Service Conference Structure to form a national service structure. This committee usually evolves from an Al-Anon Information Service or Intergroup and ends when a permanent national service structure or General Service Office begins.

All requests to translate and print or to reprint Al-Anon/Alateen Conference Approved Literature must be submitted to the World Service Office for approval by the Board of Trustees prior to any printing and distribution of Al-Anon materials. See “Conference Approved Literature and Service Tools/Materials” in the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies” section of the *Service Manual* for more information.

Notes and Updates

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Al-Anon Family Groups
Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics