

Al-Anon guidelines

The Shared Experience of Al-Anon and Alateen Members.

Al-Anon/Alateen Public Outreach Service Outreach to Institutions

G-9

Public Outreach **informs** the general public through the media, professionals, facilities, and organizations about who we are, what we do, and how to get in touch with us. Our goal is to **attract** to our program those whose lives are or have been affected by someone else's drinking, so that those who need our program can find the help and hope we offer. We also strive for name recognition and credibility as a community resource. Public Outreach includes Outreach to the Public/Media, Outreach to Professionals, and Outreach to Institutions. Your Area and/or District may choose to combine these service areas under Public Outreach, or to maintain separate coordinators and/or committees. All those in Public Outreach are encouraged to work together to avoid duplicating efforts.

Who can do public outreach?

Any willing and active Al-Anon or Alateen member with an understanding of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. It is a way for us as individuals or as a group to grow and develop in our recovery.

What is outreach to institutions?

It is a combination of providing information about Al-Anon and Alateen to staff and helping families of alcoholics learn about our program.

What is an institution?

In Al-Anon terminology, an institution is generally an organization with residential or non-residential (in- or out-patient) services. It may be accessible or have limited access to the public. Such facilities for adults or juveniles include:

- Treatment or rehabilitation centers and substance abuse agencies.
- Mental health agencies and organizations, and psychiatric centers.
- Hospitals, medical centers or health care clinics.
- Prisons, jails or detention centers.
- Group homes, halfway or "sober" houses.
- Crisis/abuse centers and domestic violence shelters.
- Facilities for troubled youth (In/Out patient or residential)

Outreach to institutions has two purposes:

To build and maintain relationships with professionals by:

- Informing and encouraging referrals of families and friends of alcoholics to our program.
- Offering our services, e.g., provide meeting schedules, literature, speakers or introductory meetings.
- Providing Al-Anon or Alateen information to alcoholics so

they can inform their family members and friends about our program when services are unavailable at the facility.

To introduce Al-Anon to families and friends of alcoholics:

- Help families and friends of alcoholics learn how to obtain local Al-Anon meeting information during or after they or the alcoholic are receiving services from the facility.
- Make information about our program available on an ongoing basis, e.g., waiting areas, resource centers and intake counselors.

What about anonymity?

- Al-Anon members need to comply with the facility regulations regarding visitors and volunteers. Tradition Eleven is maintained because registration lists of volunteers or guests do not appear on public media.
- Members are reminded not to reveal the name of anyone receiving services at the center. Patients, clients and consumers' identities are confidential.

Suggested activities:

Building and maintaining a relationship with staff:

- Is essential to receive permission to provide information to patients, clients, or consumers.
- Discuss the types of services Al-Anon can provide so that staff can determine which ones are appropriate.
- Describe the format of a workshop or introductory meeting.
- Show the literature you plan to provide to patients, clients or consumers to the staff before distributing it.
- Furnish Al-Anon and Alateen materials for professionals to use when providing their services, e.g., *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* magazines or *Al-Anon/Alateen's Role in Family Recovery* DVD (English AV-31, SAV-31 Spanish subtitles, FAV-31 French subtitles).

Introducing Al-Anon and Alateen to patients, clients, consumers, and their families:

- Identify who is in your audience, e.g., family members of alcoholics and alcoholics receiving treatment.
- Speak plainly, i.e., non-members do not understand “program jargon.”
- Keep in mind that Al-Anon is providing information at an emotionally difficult time for family members and alcoholics receiving services from the organization.
- Provide basic information about our program in workshops or introductory meetings, e.g., no dues or fees, no appointment necessary, etc.
- Have one or two members share their recovery stories or include a “Meeting on Wheels” demonstration (See guideline G-22).
- Utilize readings from Al-Anon literature.
- Have a few items of literature for attendees to keep.

What is an introductory meeting?

The purpose of an introductory meeting is to explain our program and how it helps people affected by a relative or friend’s drinking. Depending upon the facility’s regulations, these meetings are generally available only to the patients, clients, consumers or their family members. The audience is usually transient because they are in contact with the facility while they or a family member are participating in a program or receiving services from the organization.

Introductory meetings are:

- Sponsored and conducted by local Al-Anon groups, Districts and Al-Anon Information Services.
- Designed to explain our program to individuals who are unfamiliar with us.
- Led by local members.
- May meet weekly or periodically, e.g. biweekly or monthly at the request of the facility.

Suggested introductory meeting topics:

Remember, the goal of the meeting is to encourage and help attendees to attend a local Al-Anon meeting:

- Purpose of our program and recovery from alcoholism as a family disease.
- Who attends our meetings and their varied relationships to alcoholics.
- The importance of attending Al-Anon and Alateen meetings regularly whether the alcoholic is drinking or not.
- Anonymity and confidentiality of sharings.
- Groups rent meeting space at facilities such as churches but are not affiliated with outside entities.
- Contributions are voluntary.
- How we recover, e.g., tools of the program and recovery as an ongoing process.
- The benefits of attending our program.
- Our meeting format, e.g., meetings chaired by members and what we discuss.
- How to locate meetings and definitions of open and closed

meetings. Include information about Al-Anon on-line and telephone meetings for people living in communities where Al-Anon groups are unavailable.

Introductory literature handouts and information table displays:

- *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* magazines (available in English, Spanish, and French).
- “*Al-Anon can help*” English/Spanish or English/French pamphlet series (*What Happens after Treatment*, P-81 ES or EF; *Living in a Shelter?* P-82 ES or EF; or *Doubting Your Sanity* P-89 ES or EF).
- Meeting schedules or business cards with a local Al-Anon telephone number, the WSO’s toll-free meeting information number and website address.
- Outreach bookmark (English M-76; Spanish SM-76; and French FM-76).

Group meetings are also held at institutions

(See *Starting an Al-Anon Group* guideline, G-12 or *Starting an Alateen Group* guideline, G-19).

Al-Anon and Alateen groups often hold weekly meetings at treatment facilities, hospitals and other types of institutions. These meetings are usually open to the public *unless* public access is restricted by the organization, e.g., prisons, jails (see *Services in Correctional Facilities* guideline, G-14) and crisis/abuse centers. These groups are registered with their Area and the WSO. They have Group Representatives because they are self-supporting and part of the Al-Anon service structure.

Members and Al-Anon service arms may wish to consider having an introductory meeting for potential newcomers and an Al-Anon group at the same location. They can successfully hold the two meetings independently of each other.

How do I get started?

Ask your Group Representative if your District has a Public Outreach or Institutions Coordinator/Chairperson, or a Public Outreach Committee. If there aren’t any, contact your Area Public Outreach or Institutions Coordinator. Your District Representative, Delegate, Area Chairperson or the WSO can provide you with the necessary contact information.

Why do we need to work with an Area Public Outreach or Institutions Coordinator?

The Area Coordinator can help to get maximum results from the work of Al-Anon and Alateen members involved in local outreach projects.

Form an Outreach to Institutions or Public Outreach Committee

As with any area of Al-Anon and Alateen service, “the more the merrier.” Get a group of members together to come up with a plan for reaching out to local institutions. Use *The Best of Public Outreach* available in the Members page of the WSO website for ideas at: al-anon.org.

Visit the Public Outreach section of the Members’ page of the WSO Website: al-anon.org