

AL-ANON guidelines

The Shared Experience Of Al-Anon and Alateen Members.

Starting an Al-Anon Group

G-12

Starting and building a healthy group is a spiritual undertaking. It takes time and commitment. Before you start or decide to disband a group — ask for help! The district, the area, and the WSO are available to offer information, support, and encouragement. Al-Anon is a “we” program — you don’t need to go it alone! Additional information for starting and maintaining a healthy group can be found in the Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P24/27)

WHO CAN START A GROUP?

- Any two or more relatives or friends of alcoholics who meet to solve their common problem may call themselves an Al-Anon group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.
- Professionals or AA members may *initiate the formation* of an Al-Anon /Alateen group provided that the meetings are then *conducted* by Al-Anon /Alateen members.



These are the essentials needed to start a group. Depending on individual needs, there may be other factors and the sequence of events may differ.

- Contact your district representative or area delegate (the WSO can provide this information) for guidance and possible assistance.
- Determine the kind of group you want to start.
- Decide on a day and time; consider other meetings in your vicinity when making this decision.
- Find a location to hold the meeting (such as: religious facilities; schools; hospitals and other public facilities).
- Set a date for the first meeting and make flyers for distribution at the Al-Anon information service, other groups, and to post in public places.
- Select a name for the group (see below).
- Register with the WSO, area assembly and local Al-Anon information service.



WHAT KIND OF GROUPS ARE THERE?

- **Regular** groups may hold open or closed meetings and seek to attract anyone who is or has been affected by someone else’s drinking.
 - ***Open** meetings welcome non-members such as students or professionals.
 - ***Closed** meetings are for members and prospective members whose lives are affected by someone else’s drinking.
- **Limited access** groups meet in locations where our general membership may not be able to attend (such as industrial, military or school settings).
- **Institution** groups meet in a hospital, treatment center or correctional facility, etc. (Some groups that meet in hospitals or treatment centers are regular groups. They differ from institution groups in that institution groups are usually transient and are basically beginners’ meetings.)
- **Special focus groups** seek to *attract* a special category of members providing the group remains open and does not *exclude* any Al-Anon member who needs a meeting.
- Other types of groups identify the meeting’s format - such as beginners’, study group, Step group, etc.
- In vicinities where Al-Anon is new, an Al-Anon group with open meetings on a variety of topics such as slogans, Steps, detachment, etc. can work very well.

WHAT NAME SHOULD WE CHOOSE?

Most groups use a name that is either descriptive of its location, time or day of meeting, meeting purpose, or a program phrase - plus the words “Al-Anon” or AFG (Al-Anon Family Group). It is important to avoid selecting a name that might imply affiliation with an outside entity, such as the name of the place where the group meets. Here are some suggested names:

- Main Street AFG
- Thursday Night Al-Anon
- **Thank God It’s Friday AFG**
- **Toledo Tuesday Noon AFG**
- **Paths to Recovery AFG**
- *Monday Night Al-Anon Beginners Group*
- Serenity Seekers AFG



WHAT GROUP POSITIONS ARE THERE?

The following is a brief outline of group trusted servants. An in-depth description can be found in the Al-Anon /Alateen Service Manual that is sent free to each group when it registers

- **The group representative (GR)*** is a member who will attend district meetings and area assemblies, make Al-Anon announcements, suggest application of the Twelve Traditions; encourage the use of Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature and *The Forum*, and share information from Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. (Al-Anon members who are also members of AA may not serve as GR.)
- **The chairperson/secretary** opens and closes meetings, provides speakers, and introduces topic or program (may be separate positions).
- **The treasurer** collects Seventh Tradition donations and money from literature sales, maintains group funds, pays group expenses, reports income/expenses at regular intervals, and reminds members of the need to contribute to the WSO and local service structure. (In some groups, the GR or chairperson announces appeals for funding our service structure.)
- **The literature chairperson** orders, displays and puts away Conference Approved Literature.
- **The coffee/hospitality chairperson** makes coffee/tea before meetings, greets newcomers, purchases coffee and supplies, and cleans up the coffee station after the meeting.

*Note: The name of the group representative (GR) is listed in the WSO data base, but not a requirement for registration. When a group forms, it sometimes takes a while for the group to elect a GR. One of the individuals who is starting the group can serve as contact until one is elected.



HOW DO WE REGISTER WITH THE WSO?

Write, call, or fax the World Service Office and ask for a registration form. With the following information in writing, the WSO will register your group immediately:

- Name of your group
- Date, time of your meeting, and any special features of your meeting (no smoking, wheelchair accessibility, etc.) including instructions if the location of your meeting is difficult to find within the facility (i.e. upstairs, downstairs)
- Current mailing address (CMA) of the person who will receive the mail from the WSO for your group (it can be any individual in the group, or a post office box)
- Contact names - preferably two, but at least one person who is willing to take calls from newcomers or from other members seeking a meeting
- Alateen groups need an Al-Anon member(s) to serve as a sponsor before the group is registered with the WSO

Note: The WSO will register any group designating itself as an Al-Anon Family Group with the understanding that it will abide by the Traditions and that meetings will be open to any Al-Anon or Alateen member. The WSO cannot register any group that is solely for Al-Anon members who are also recovering alcoholics and members of AA, because it does not qualify to have a group representative.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM OUR DISTRICT AND AREA?

Each state/province in the US and Canada is considered an area and elects an area delegate. In some states or provinces, depending on number of groups, there may be two areas and delegates. Within each area there are usually districts with district representatives (DRs). Once the group begins, attendance at district meetings by the GR will keep the group healthy and connected.

- Working with a DR can help you determine the needs of your district in terms of starting a group.
- Some districts provide start-up literature and other information to help new groups.
- DRs often visit the group to provide support, information and assist the groups with problems that may occur.
- District involvement helps to get other members to attend and support your meeting.
- The local Al-Anon information service (AIS) and area assembly can make referrals to your group.



WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM THE WSO?

Registration with the WSO insures a connection with worldwide Al-Anon. When you register your group, you can count on the WSO for ongoing support including the following:

- A loose-leaf binder filled with information on a variety of subjects such as keeping group, district, and area records; suggested meeting formats; group tips and topics; information about Conference Approved Literature, service materials, and suggestions for maintaining group finances.
- A complimentary copy of the *Al-Anon /Alateen Service Manual* and service tools to help the group thrive and grow (a copy is automatically sent to each registered group when it is revised).
- *Inside Al-Anon Xtra* - a newsletter to keep you posted on Al-Anon news, events, and announcements of new literature and service material.
- The WSO will refer members who call on the toll-free meeting line directory to your group by giving them the information that you provide.
- Group update sheets and other periodic mailings from the WSO with service tips and topics.



Announce the formation of your group to as many individuals as possible. Tell them about the start date, either by mail or in person. You can also invite members from other groups. Your group may have a small attendance at first; Al-Anon is a program of attraction. Given time, the group will grow. Here are some suggestions...

- Announce the meeting at local district and Al-Anon information service meetings.
- Notify professionals such as members of the clergy, medical, and legal professions, and others who counsel families of alcoholics.
- Announce the meeting time, date, and location in the local newspaper. Many papers list the meetings without charge in the local events column.
- Ask AA members to announce the start of your new meeting.

The Al-Anon Group is the heart of the Al-Anon Program!