

Memo

To: Officers, Coordinators, DRs, Groups
From: WSO
Subject: Cooperation with scientific researchers
Date: September 26, 2011

In the past year, some Al-Anon groups were invited to share a message with their members, presenting them with an opportunity to participate in a scientific research project that would study some aspects of family recovery from the effects of alcoholism. Following this invitation, some Al-Anon members had questions about Al-Anon's policy of cooperating with—but not affiliating with—researchers.

Al-Anon has cooperated with professionals in the scientific community since its founding, more than 60 years ago. Our basic public relations policy has always been based on the distinction between attraction and promotion, stated in Tradition Eleven. This distinction is explained at greater length in the Public Relations section of the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies," on p. 107 in the *2010-2013 Al-Anon Alateen Service Manual*. Page 107 quotes (in its entirety) a statement first adopted by the sixth World Service Conference in 1966, and reaffirmed by the eleventh World Service Conference in 1971. That statement explains that in working with outside organizations, Al-Anon is better able to "reach many more of those in need." Examples of such outside organizations include alcoholism agencies at every level of local and national government, general hospitals and mental hospitals, doctors, nurses, social workers, and educators.

Several years ago, the Policy Committee approved a policy, for internal use, to guide the World Service Office in its interactions with scientific researchers. Since some members have asked about how Al-Anon works with researchers, the Policy Committee voted in July to share this policy more widely, with the fellowship at large. This internal policy document is attached below, for your information.

If you have any further questions about Al-Anon's policies regarding cooperation with the scientific community, please contact the WSO at 757.563.1600 or via e-mail at wso@al-anon.org.

Cooperation with researchers

Policy

Al-Anon cooperates with researchers who are studying the effects of alcoholism as a family disease. Under no circumstances will Al-Anon's Tradition of anonymity be compromised. Outside researchers will not have direct access to Al-Anon's membership information, databases, or mailing lists. Al-Anon will present to members the opportunity to cooperate with researchers, which will be entirely voluntary, at the individual member's discretion. Researchers will never directly solicit members of Al-Anon, either as individuals or members of an Al-Anon group or service arm. While Al-Anon can cooperate with researchers, Al-Anon can never endorse or affiliate with an outside enterprise, or appear to be doing so.

Procedures

The WSO's Information Analyst will act as Al-Anon's liaison with researchers. When researchers request Al-Anon cooperation, the Information Analyst will provide background and explain Al-Anon's approval process. If the researcher decides to request Al-Anon participation in the project, the Information Analyst and other staff will evaluate whether the request is appropriate for further consideration.

If the request is deemed appropriate, it will be forwarded to a work group of two staff and two volunteers, appointed by the Policy Chair. This work group will evaluate whether cooperation with the research project would benefit Al-Anon: scientific studies that document the effectiveness of Al-Anon as a recovery program could increase the credibility and perceived relevance of Al-Anon to a wider cross-section of people in need.

After approval by the work group, the staff will negotiate an agreement with the researcher to define boundaries and determine the scope of Al-Anon's participation in the project.

While Al-Anon respects the independence of the outside researcher, Al-Anon expects researchers to check with Al-Anon on the accuracy about any statement made about the program in general, to request copyright permissions when appropriate, and to share in advance of publication the results of the study. Al-Anon will respect embargo limitations prior to publication and copyright restrictions after publication.

In exchange for participation in the project, Al-Anon expects to cooperate with the researcher to make the results of the study widely available to Al-Anon members and potential members.