

A.A.® Guidelines

Literature Committees

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

The A.A. Guidelines below are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members throughout the U.S. and Canada. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference. In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

LET LITERATURE CARRY THE MESSAGE, TOO

Today, as in the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous, the A.A. message of recovery from alcoholism is carried by one alcoholic talking to another. However, since the publication of the first edition of the Big Book in 1939, literature has played an important role in spreading the A.A. message and imparting information about the A.A. Twelve Step program of recovery.

The newcomer, walking into an A.A. group for the first time, may be given a meeting list, basic recovery pamphlets and, depending on the individual group conscience, perhaps a copy of *Living Sober* or the Big Book.

In 1992, the Conference Literature Committee suggested that the trustees' Literature Committee develop literature committee guidelines comprised of shared experience from the Fellowship.

These guidelines provide a summary of shared experience of A.A.s in the groups, central and intergroup offices, general service areas and districts who have formed literature committees and shared how they "Let Literature Carry the Message, Too."

PURPOSE OF A LITERATURE CHAIRPERSON

Whether group, central office or intergroup, area or district, a literature chairperson:

- Informs groups, district or area assembly members, through displays and other suitable methods, of all available Conference-approved literature, audiovisual material and other special items.
- Provides service-oriented literature for groups and area and district functions as funded.
- Considers suggestions regarding proposed additions to and changes in Conference-approved literature and audiovisual material.
- Encourages A.A. members to read and purchase A.A. Conference-approved literature.

HOW TO GET STARTED

- Write G.S.O. for a copy of the Conference-approved Literature Catalog, updated literature information and order forms.
- Become familiar with literature and audiovisual material.
- Ask G.S.O. for a complimentary literature package to create a display.
- Discuss literature needs of the central office, group, area and district.

- Form a literature committee and make a traveling literature display.
- Prepare a budget.
- Plan ahead where you want to exhibit A.A. literature.

GROUP LITERATURE CHAIRS

The group's literature chairperson makes certain that A.A. Conference-approved books and pamphlets, ordered from the General Service Office or purchased from the local intergroup (central office), are on hand for meetings and properly displayed.

A group literature chair or representative can obtain information on their responsibility by writing to the literature coordinator at G.S.O. Regular communications are sent to literature chairs from G.S.O., and G.S.O. also keeps a list of literature chairs and representatives.

Many A.A. groups purchase bulk subscriptions to *Box 4-5-9* (a unit of 10 copies, 6 times a year, \$6.00) for distribution to their members, thus providing them regular communication with A.A. in the U.S., Canada and countries throughout the world. Some groups also have bulk subscriptions to the A.A. Grapevine.

AREA LITERATURE CHAIRS

Experience indicates that a thorough knowledge of A.A. literature is a good way to assure that our primary purpose remains the focus for successful A.A. groups and members. You can be a part of the solution by emphasizing our books, pamphlets, videos and service material.

Some areas hold workshops to help local groups and district chairperson learn about where A.A. literature comes from and the Conference process.

DISTRICT LITERATURE CHAIRS

Suggested guidelines for a district literature chairperson:

- Maintain a stock of suggested literature for D.C.M. to give new G.S.R.s.
- Keep a stock of catalogs for Conference-approved literature.
- Keep an ample stock of all current General Service Conference-approved pamphlets, books, videos and other material.
- Keep current on new and upcoming as well as revised literature and material from G.S.O.
- Set up this material for viewing and sale at all functions, including: workshops, conferences and meetings.

- Order literature. for district activities as needed.
- Become familiar with the general contents of all literature, in order to provide information to inquirers.
- Be represented at and participate in literature committee functions and communicate as much as possible with the General Service Conference and trustees' Literature Committees.

REFERENCES FOR LITERATURE CHAIRS

- An overview of the substance and content of our literature is found in the *A.A. Service Manual* (pages S129 - S133, '93/'94 edition).
- A "job description" for a literature chairperson is found in "The A.A. Group" pamphlet (page 28). This description equally relates to the district function.
- **Conference-approved Literature and Other Service Material** (catalog) with corresponding order form.
- **Service Material Available from G.S.O.** This service piece is an excellent source of material that will aid in informing your district and G.S.R.s.
- **What is Service Material?** Service material, available to A.A. members upon request, differs from Conference-approved literature in that it has not come about through Conference Advisory Action. It is produced when there is a need for readily available information on a specific subject. Service Material reflects A.A. group experience as well as specific and timely information that is subject to change.
- **Box 4-5-9** (order form). A.A.'s bimonthly newsletter carries the most recent A.A. announcements and news from across the U.S. and Canada, as well as A.A. worldwide. Encourage the G.S.R.s in your district to suggest that their groups subscribe to *Box 4-5-9*, and ask permission of your district to order a bulk subscription for your literature table.
- The **Literature Chairperson Information** form (available from G.S.O.) may be filled out and sent to G.S.O.'s Literature Coordinator. Please make a copy available to your area literature chairperson. These forms may also be made available to the G.S.R.s in your district to take back to their groups to register their literature representative. G.S.O. sends literature activity reports and updates to all literature chairs/contacts, usually three times a year.

SHARING FROM LITERATURE COMMITTEES

One area committee reviewed all A.A. literature and submitted a report, summarized here:

In carrying out this project, we have completed an inventory, not unlike the Fourth Step, of our literature. The result has not been an increased negative attitude towards our literature, but rather an awakening to our wealth of literature and the many possibilities for its use. Along with this awakening has come a spirit of cooperation in striving to make our literature the most effective possible.

Another area committee has formed guidelines for their literature committee elections, meetings, subcommittees and district liaison persons, budget, officers and their duties, and members' responsibilities.

Both committees concluded displaying A.A. literature and audiovisual materials at every possible area and district function and selling literature at those functions helps to carry the A.A. message and fulfill our primary purpose.

A district literature chairperson reports:

We have an inventory of all pamphlets and books and also most of the other items, such as tapes, directories, etc. We sell these items to the groups at the prices published by G. S. O. We do not give the groups the 20% discount that we get for pamphlets because that amount helps offset the cost of pamphlets We give away through our H&I Public Information and Cooperation With the Professional Community committees.

We have a monthly literature meeting with the groups in our district at which we talk about any new items that have been released by G. S. O. We also try to pick one literature item to discuss to help everyone learn about how important the literature is when it comes to carrying the message.

I also have made myself available to take a literature display to group business meetings, as well as group meetings for literature studies. This seems to be a very good way to get the literature message to several people at the same time.

My own opinion is that the literature is the best way to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. There can be no confusion with words when you see them in black and white. To this end I think that anything you can do to make people aware of literature is very acceptable.

An area literature chair shares:

My experience is limited to one year on the area committee and my observation of it for the prior year. We only deal with Conference-approved items listed in the catalog, Grapevine is a separate committee. Our purpose at this time is to display the materials so that G.S.R.s and others see what is available to their groups.

We display all of the hardback and softback books, plus pamphlets and an assortment of the other lower-cost service items. We set up our display at all area assembly and district committee meetings, our mini conference, the state conference when hosted and any other time we are asked, i.e., district workshops, area workshops and P. I. type events.

We are not displaying any other Twelve Step literature or anything not in the catalog or available from G.S.O. as a service item. We try to stock at least two of each book and five of each pamphlet. We carry one of all other items that we can justify costwise.

We do not stock many copies of the Final Conference Report or of the A.A. Service Manual, but they are for sale. We also

tend to have more than five of the service pamphlets, such as 'The A.A. Group,' "Your G.S.R.," "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated." The reasoning behind multiple copies of books and pamphlets is as follows: If someone wants an item desperately, we will sell or give it to them depending upon the need. This is kind of a gray area and we could probably use some sort of policy. We try to present one item per month to the assembly/district meeting. Sort of a "If you never looked inside this, here's what's in it" deal.

I think it is safe to say we will never sell literature at a profit or handle non-Conference-approved items unless we all decide to drink again. We will probably not be in favor of individual groups using basket income for outside items either.

Some practical suggestions from a committee on how to make an attractive display:

Order a complimentary Literature Display package from G.S.O. and buy enough pamphlet racks to display all the pamphlets.

Order a complete set of books and buy or make stand to display them upright.

Use three-fold 3'x4' display panels from a local office supply store and make some attractive displays of service pieces, foreign pamphlets, newsletters, etc.

Display some of the lesser known items, such as Braille publications, cassettes and videos, books on tape, Conference Reports, etc.

Display the large poster-size items, such as anonymity declaration, unity statement, Bill and Bob's last messages, etc.

Provide extra copies of literature order forms for individuals/groups.

Once the committee had a literature display and was setting it up at district and intergroup functions they were frustrated at the way it would just sit there with members walking right by it. So they sought suggestions from other literature committees for ways to attract members' attention to the display. Four ways that they found worked very well were:

Making a banner of color xeroxes of the book covers of the foreign editions of the Big Book and hanging it above the literature display.

Having a computer with the Big Book on disc loaded up, with some simple instructions next to it on how to word search.

Having a VCR and a TV with one of the videos, such as "Bill's Own Story" which has been known to draw a crowd at our local events.

Having a tape recorder and earphones with A.A. cassettes.

Another area reports:

Our area assemblies always have three or four tables of literature for sale and display, consisting of all books and pamphlets. The area literature chair usually asks the D.C.M. of the

host district to get some volunteers from local groups to help staff the tables. This helps to get members interested in the literature. One lady, who had sat in only a couple of times before she moved from the area, helped get a literature committee started in another area.

All recovery material is placed together and in plain sight, including all formats of the Big Book, Braille and audio tapes, and extra Spanish material in areas where there is a large Spanish community. All P. I. and C. P.C. Pamphlets and video and audio cassettes are kept together and arranged neatly. Other service pamphlets, Guidelines, and the Fact File are in another section with all Workbooks. Tables are always neat, with literature catalogs in plain sight and easy reach. Any literature chairperson should be informed of what is in stock and have a good idea of what is in each item, so, if asked a question, they would know where to look for the answer.

The area bought one Big Book in every language for a display (50th year) which was to be turned over to the archives at a later date, but most were sold at the assemblies.

Our local district has a traveling display board with all pamphlets, book covers, Guidelines, A.A. Fact File, Box 4-5-9, local intergroup's newsletter and business cards from our central office, with address and phone number.

One district chair reports:

I took a suitcase of literature out to different groups, would ask the chairperson of the group for a few minutes for a short pitch of what they had available in Conference-approved literature. This was received well, especially at groups in small towns that were some distance from our central office. One district in our area has a literature chair that writes an article in their district newsletter. He tells of some interesting parts of the book that he is reading at present.

A central office shares:

We have a good relationship with our general service committees, lending literature for display at district functions. The central office has a display rack with all pamphlets. These are placed near meeting schedules so a person looking for the schedules might see a pamphlet that would interest him or her. All books are at the catalog price, We have a fairly large Spanish community, so we keep a supply of Spanish literature. At all social events, we have a literature drawing and ask all groups to donate some literature for the event. This keeps sales up at the central office and gets the message out Many times when someone wins a book, they ask if a newcomer needs it, or it may go to one of our committees.

SOME GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE LITERATURE COMMITTEE ADVISORY ACTIONS

It was recommended that:

1968: Conference-approved literature and G.S.O. Guidelines be displayed and distributed at assembly meetings.

- 1969: One group member be chosen to be solely responsible for the distribution of Conference-approved literature and its display.
- 1971: The delegates assume responsibility for informing A.A.s of all available Conference-approved literature, and that the updated spring and fall literature order blanks which are mailed with *Box 4-5-9* be reviewed at district and assembly meetings.
- 1972: It be suggested that when a local A.A. facility (central office, intergroup, group, etc.) sells non-Conference-approved literature, it be clearly designated as such.
- 1977: It was suggested that A.A. groups be discouraged from selling literature not distributed by the General Service Office and the Grapevine.
- 1986: In an effort to strengthen our network of literature representatives to ensure that A.A. literature is available at meetings, as well as catalog order forms for books and cassettes that individuals are likely to want, it is suggested that groups appoint literature coordinators.

The spirit of the 1977 Conference action regarding group literature displays be reaffirmed, and recommended the suggestion that A.A. groups be encouraged to display or sell only literature published and distributed by the General Service Office, the A.A. Grapevine and other A.A. entities.

RELATIONSHIP TO G.S.O.

G.S.O. maintains a mailing list of literature chairperson (U.S. and Canada). All are sent *Box 4-5-9*. Each newly elected literature chairperson receives a welcoming letter from the Literature Coordinator at G.S.O. Enclosed are: "The A.A. Group" pamphlet; literature catalog; service piece on Conference-approved literature; current issue of *Box 4-5-9*; 5 *Box 4-5-9* subscription blanks; 5 postage-paid envelopes; list of service material available at G.S.O.

From time to time an update of new and revised literature is sent by G.S.O.'s Publications Department.

EXTENDING THE HAND OF A.A. THROUGH TRANSLATIONS

Translations of A.A. material come about in two different ways:

The A.A.W.S. Board has pamphlets and/or the Big Book and/or *The Twelve Steps* and *Twelve Traditions* translated for countries where A.A. is in its earliest beginnings.

OR

A.A.W.S. gives a license to a single General Service Office per country so that they may take the responsibility of publishing and distributing A.A. literature in a language or languages appropriate for that country.

At the present time there are 52 General Service Offices operating worldwide in addition to our U.S./Canada General Service Office. The Big Book has been translated into 47 languages. This is an amazing achievement and leap forward from A.A.'s beginning with two members in Akron, Ohio on June 10, 1935.

WHO KNEW THAT A.A. PAMPHLETS WERE DIVIDED INTO FOUR CATEGORIES?

The following is a brief explanation of the significance of pamphlet cover design and designation.

Our literature is divided into four categories — Recovery, Unity, Service and Professional pamphlets. The pamphlet covers are designed so that you can identify immediately a recovery, service, unity or professional pamphlet when pamphlets are displayed in a literature rack. These cover designs have been around for over 15 years and, yet, it seems that the design format is news to many A.A. members.

The banner/flag design on the pamphlet "Is A.A. For You?," represents the basic design for all recovery pamphlets. If you look in your literature rack, anything with a banner/flag design is written especially for newcomers. Pamphlets which have a step design are either service or unity pamphlets. All service pamphlets have a step design and a colored rectangle. "Your A.A. General Service Office" is an example of a "service design" pamphlet cover. Unity pamphlets have a step design, no rectangle. The pamphlet, "Speaking at Non-A.A. Meetings," is an example of "a unity" pamphlet cover design. Pamphlet covers with bold colors with no steps and no banners/flags are pamphlets created for the professional community. An example would be the pamphlet, 'If You Are a Professional...'

DIRECT PHONE NUMBER FOR LITERATURE ORDERS

G.S.O.'s Publications Department has a direct phone number for customers placing change orders, researching orders, and having problems with orders received.

The direct number is: (212) 870-3312.

This number may also be used to get ordering information and current prices. Please do not use this number if you wish to be sent a catalog. Call: (212) 870-3400.

Fax order form to us any time. Our line is open 24 hours daily: 1-212-870-3137; 1-800-437-3584.

Please keep in touch so that your activities may be shared through *Box 4-5-9* and the Literature desk and your experiences can be added to the files, to help others who are involved in this rewarding area of service