

About A.A.

A NEWSLETTER FOR PROFESSIONALS

WINTER
2023

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90th Anniversary
International
Convention —
Vancouver 2025!



There Is Help for Those with a Drinking Problem

Problem drinkers can be hard to help, as denial can be one of the central characteristics of those who suffer from alcoholism. “I don’t really have a problem. I just like to relax with a beer after work,” or “I can quit any time I want,” are statements often heard from those who may have a drinking problem but are not ready or willing to address it. There are those, too, who may be willing to acknowledge that they have a problem but may not have any real idea of how they could overcome it.

Alcoholics Anonymous is filled with people who

have accepted their drinking problem and set foot on the road to recovery. Yet for professionals who work with alcoholics and problem drinkers, it is sometimes difficult to guide such people toward the help they need.

Professionals often contact the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, located in New York City and with a strong online presence through the website aa.org, asking how to get their clients or patients into A.A. Questions such as these are often brought up: Does a person need to have a minimum

GET IN TOUCH: cpc@aa.org • 212-870-3400 • Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163 • www.aa.org

amount of sobriety in order to attend a meeting? Do they need a recommendation from a professional? What if they are “checking out” A.A. and are not ready to commit? Do they need to get a sponsor? Are there certain meetings they need to go to? Why is A.A. anonymous?

To dispel some of the uncertainty that may arise for professionals, A.A. has created many resources, including:

- A “FAQ” page <https://www.aa.org/faqs>
- A dedicated webpage for professionals <https://www.aa.org/aa-for-professionals>
- Videos and print materials developed for professionals (see below for links)

Some basic information about A.A. for any professional working with problem drinkers:

1. A.A. is built around a group of Twelve Traditions that guide its operation and provide a framework for A.A. meetings across the United States and Canada and, literally, around the world.

2. A.A. attendance is always free (we often say “there are no dues or fees for A.A. membership”).

3. Anyone who has concerns or questions about their drinking is welcome (we have no membership requirements other than a desire to stop drinking).

4. A.A. is not organized or run by any professionals or certified practitioners — our members have found sobriety through a simple 12-step program and meet regularly to support one another and help others who may need help.

5. Because we are “anonymous” individual problem drinkers don’t have to worry that attendance will be reported to their employer, their family or anyone else. Each member is entitled to share with others as much or as little as they like.

6. A.A. members are diverse. Members come from all social groups, religions (or non-religions), genders, ethnicities and age groups. In many communities there are meetings in languages other than English.

7. A.A. does not require members to do or believe anything, however there are suggestions, which are based on the experience of those who have gotten and stayed sober in Alcoholics Anonymous.

10. A.A. is not religious. Members are not required to believe anything; many find they can get and stay sober when they look for a power greater than themselves for help, which is part of the A.A. program, whether that be a god, spiritual principles, nature, or the fellowship itself.

The concept of mutual aid animates Alcoholics Anonymous and members are accepting of newcomers — fellow sufferers — from all walks of life. As noted in the latest survey of its membership, published in 2024, anyone with a desire to stop drinking is welcome in A.A. meetings, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, income or profession. More than half of those surveyed were referred to A.A. by

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8. One suggestion is to find a “home group” where they regularly attend meetings and develop a network of support with other members.

9. Another frequently heard suggestion is for new members to get a sponsor, which is another sober member who can help walk the newcomer through A.A.’s Twelve Steps.

a counselor, medical or mental health professional. The frequent misconception that A.A. is a religious program can sometimes be an impediment to encouraging problem drinkers to attend meetings. The reality that many A.A. meetings are held in churches or other religious institutions can contribute to this misperception, while the true relationship

between A.A. meetings and such institutions is that of Landlord and Tenant. Religious institutions have often opened their doors to A.A., providing meeting space at reasonable rent which allows alcoholics to gather regularly in local communities. A.A., as such, is not affiliated with the religious nature of these institutions and requires no affirmation of faith of any kind. While spiritual principles have always been foundational in A.A., the A.A. program of recovery has consistently stayed clear of any particular religious framework.

Members recognize as well that A.A. may not be the only path to sobriety for problem drinkers seeking help, but for those who have been helped by attendance at A.A. meetings and adherence to A.A.'s program of recovery, found principally in its Twelve suggested Steps, the results are beyond question.

A.A. has lots of material aimed at problem drinkers looking for help, as well as material for those professionals who work with alcoholics and want to know more about it for their patients or clients.

From its inception A.A. has sought to work with professionals to help problem drinkers find recovery and a way of life free of alcohol. Some professionals may be reluctant to send a client or patient to A.A. because that person may still be drinking. However, it is not a requirement that attendees be sober. Some people have shown up drunk at meet-

ings before finding their way ultimately to sobriety. Others attend principally as observers, skeptical, perhaps, and wanting to see if the A.A. approach might work for them. Open meetings are for anyone to attend and it's not necessary to identify as an alcoholic; one can simply show up and listen. Additionally, A.A. has no opinion on medication, recognizing that such questions are best determined between the patient and their health care provider.

Most A.A. members understand alcoholism to be a progressive illness which can never be cured, but which, like other illnesses, can be arrested — by learning to stay away from the first drink, one day at a time. The first and most critical Step in our program is admis-

sion by the individual that he or she is, or may be becoming, powerless over alcohol and that their life is becoming, even incrementally, unmanageable. It is often helpful for them to talk with an A.A. member, as it may help them to understand the nature of the illness and to recognize that they are not alone.

This connection between one alcoholic and another has been the bridge for millions of sufferers to happy and meaningful lives. It can be that way for many others.

To learn more about A.A. and how it can help as a resource for professionals, contact the General Service Office of A.A. through the Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) Coordinator at cpc@aa.org or call 212-870-3107. ■

**IN ADDITION TO THE WEBSITE AA.ORG
THESE HELPFUL RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE:**

A NEWCOMER ASKS

<https://www.aa.org/newcomer-asks>

IS A.A. FOR ME?

<https://www.aa.org/aa-me>

THIS IS A.A.

<https://www.aa.org/aa-introduction-aa-recovery-program>

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SPONSORSHIP

<https://www.aa.org/questions-and-answers-sponsorship>

A.A. AS A RESOURCE FOR THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL

<https://www.aa.org/aa-resource-health-care-professional>

FAITH LEADERS ASK ABOUT A.A.

<https://www.aa.org/faith-leaders-ask-about-aa>

IF YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL

<https://www.aa.org/if-you-are-professional>

A.A. IN YOUR COMMUNITY

<https://www.aa.org/aa-your-community>

HIGHLIGHT

90th Anniversary International Convention — *Vancouver 2025!*

Next year over the Fourth of July weekend (July 3–6, 2024), A.A. members from around the world will be converging on Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada to celebrate A.A.'s 90th birthday with a broad spectrum of sobriety-related meetings, panels, and workshops on what we are calling the 2025 Vancouver Convention Campus, that includes the Vancouver Convention Centre, the BC Place stadium and other locations throughout the city of Vancouver.

Held in different locations every five years, A.A.'s International Conventions have been hosted in U.S. and Canadian cities with cultures and personalities as varied as the alcoholics who travel to them for the celebration, and in Vancouver some 50,000 attendees will celebrate not only their own sobriety and newfound lives, but also their great desire to pass on the message of recovery to another alcoholic who may not yet have heard that there is hope.

The theme of the 2025 International Convention will be “Language of the Heart” — a phrase from A.A.'s basic text, Alcoholics Anonymous, recognizing the importance of our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message to other alcoholics!

Over the years, many nonalcoholic professionals have addressed the Convention as guest speakers on a wide range of important topics, and hundreds of other meetings will share the diverse experience, strength and hope of A.A. members from around the world.

Professionals who would like to find out more about the Convention may contact the International Convention Desk at the General Service Office of A.A.: (212) 870-2025, or access G.S.O.'s A.A. website at www.aa.org/international-convention. Members of the media may contact the Public Information Desk at (212) 870-3119. ■



Language of the Heart
Lenguaje del corazón
Le langage du cœur