

## “Alcoholics Anonymous; how may we help you?”

Thousands of times a year, a voice on the phone cheerfully offers understanding and compassion to an alcoholic who has sunk into the throes of despair and hopelessness. Intergroup phone-service workers, who are sober members of A.A. for a year or more and have attended a Phone Training Workshop, have saved many lives by ensuring that A.A.'s phones are answered.

Intergroup phone-service workers are an integral part of Alcoholics Anonymous. They represent A.A. and may be the first impression that callers have of our fellowship. A voice of attraction to new persons calling us for help may be their first step toward finding a new way of life in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

During regular business hours, 9am to 5pm weekdays and 9am to 1pm Saturdays, Intergroup phones are answered by morning and afternoon front-office service workers. After business hours, the phones are transferred to service workers' homes or cell phones. The calls are forwarded automatically to the service workers but their personal numbers are not available to the callers.

If you are interested in this vital area of A.A. service, please contact Intergroup for information on how to join the Hotline and sign up for a time slot.

### Important Information for All Phone-Service Workers

You have made a commitment to be of service to the alcoholic who still suffers. It is important to understand how A.A.'s 12 Steps and 12 Traditions apply to your efforts to carry A.A.'s message of hope. Please read (or reread) the following publications:

- A.A. At a Glance.
- Information on Alcoholics Anonymous (white copy, both sides)
- A.A. Tradition—How It Developed, By Bill W.
- The Twelve Traditions Illustrated
- Understanding Anonymity
- Chapter 7—Working with Others
- (Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book, p.89)

## Training and Orientation

Answering calls from suffering alcoholics is the primary reason for the existence of Intergroup.

### As a phone-service worker, please:

1. Be available for your shift.
2. Answer by saying “Alcoholics Anonymous; how may I help you?”
3. Assist in finding A.A. meetings in their areas for the callers.
4. Understand that you are not acting as a 12-stepper, but do offer to have someone (from an approved list) contact those callers who want to talk at length about A.A.
5. Be as prompt as possible with each call in the event Intergroup telephones become busy.
6. Keep language clean and in good taste. Do *not* flirt or make off-color comments.
7. Do *not* express opinions, take sides in controversies, or say anything that would reflect poorly on Alcoholics Anonymous or the Intergroup office. Keep A.A.'s traditions foremost in mind when answering phones.

### IMPORTANT!

1. Never give out any person's phone number, including your own.
2. Never give out names, telephone numbers, addresses or other personal information regarding any A.A. member.
3. Never give medical advice. Never recommend any treatment program or facility. Direct such calls to the TN Redline at 1-800-889-9789.
4. Never call police on or for a caller. However, there may be some unusual life-threatening situations that may require a call to 911.
5. Minimize personal calls. It is important to keep phone lines open for the next needy caller.
6. **Remember**, we are Alcoholics Anonymous and nothing else, and as such we carry only the A.A. message.

## Types of Calls

Realize that a newcomer's first impression (and possibly the only impression) of Alcoholics Anonymous is the telephone call or office visit. It is our desire that this impression be favorable.

Providing meeting information: Unless callers request specific meeting information, inform them of the closest and/or soonest meetings available to them.

Court-Ordered Attendees: Refer them to the closest Open meeting to them and explain the difference between Open and Closed meetings. Also let them know that A.A. is in no way affiliated with the courts or any other outside entities.

Third-party calls: Frequently a third party who is concerned about a loved one's drinking calls for help. Often it is useful to refer this person to the Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups and ask them to encourage the drinker himself/herself to call us directly for help.

Information about A.A.: Assist callers as best you can or refer them to the staff during office hours. It's okay to *not* have answers for all callers' questions.

Information on other 12-step programs: For those seeking information on 12-step programs other than A.A., refer them to TN Redline's 24-hr. hotline 1-800-889-9789.

Requests for rides: Intergroup **does not** provide a ride service. We can request only that someone from the 12-step list agrees to make a 12-step call. Whether that person also provides a ride or not is entirely up to him or her.

7. Prank Calls: Sometimes it is obvious that a caller is not looking for help. These calls are almost impossible to handle adequately. It may be necessary to firmly terminate such calls.

## 12-Step Calls

The dual necessity for diplomacy and speed is a difficult balance to attain. Each situation usually dictates the method. Service workers' continued experiences will develop in them a feeling for various callers and their circumstances.

There are situations when a return call from another alcoholic may be in order. If a caller is new to the area, has never been to Alcoholics Anonymous before or is concerned about his/her drinking, offer to have a member of A.A. call back with more information and assistance. If the caller is willing to receive a return call, get adequate information from them for the person who will make the return call.

1. first name
2. telephone number
3. general location
4. date and time
5. if drinking now, current condition

Tell the caller:

- A sober member of A.A. will call back ASAP.
- If not contacted by an A.A. member, he/she should call again.
- He/she may call anytime, 24/7, *especially* before taking a drink.

**Never give a member's phone number to a caller.  
Always assign a 12-stepper of the same sex.**

When the caller is off the phone, the next step is to contact a 12-step service worker from the 12-step list in your phone packet. The list is sorted by area. Try to find the closest person. You may have to make a few calls before someone is available.

Once an available service worker is found, ask if that person can contact the caller within 10 minutes. If the 12-step worker is willing, provide him/her with the caller's information. Remind the service worker **never** to go on a 12-step call alone.

We try to keep our 12-step list as current as possible. If you should call a number and it is disconnected or the person answering says he/she no longer wants to be a service worker, please so advise the phone coordinator or the office.

## Step 12

**Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**

### Going on a 12-Step Call

Here are a few suggestions that experience has shown to be helpful when performing 12-step calls.

- Be available and call back promptly to arrange your visit. Be sure to get directions.
- When returning a call, dial \*67 before the number to conceal your personal phone number.
- NEVER go alone. ALWAYS have someone accompany you; a sponsor or sponsee is an appropriate choice.
- 12-step calls have been made to motel rooms, private homes and hospitals. If a prospect is currently sober, you could arrange to meet him/her at a public place or at a meeting. In no case are 12-step calls to be made in bars.
- Men call on men, women call on women; in extreme emergencies, however, a man/woman team may call on either.
- Be patient, compassionate and listen. Share freely of your experience—especially your feelings of loneliness, hopelessness and confusion before A.A.
- Be familiar with Alcoholics Anonymous Chapter 7, "Working with Others." It contains a wealth of practical experience regarding 12-step work.

**Hotline Coordinator  
Jacque 865-296-5401**

## THE VOICE ON THE PHONE & 12-STEP CALLS



### ETIAA

East Tennessee Intergroup of  
Alcoholics Anonymous  
9217 Park West Blvd #B3  
Knoxville, TN 37923  
(865) 522-9667

### Emergency and Referral Numbers

All Emergencies	911
AA Hotline	865-522-9667
Bridging the Gap	865-566-5619
TN REDLINE	800-889-9789
National Suicide Hotline	800-273-8255
Knoxville Suicide Hotline	865-523-9124
NA Helpline	866-617-1710
AL-ANON Knoxville	865-525-9040
DAA	865-245-5129