

## “Alcoholics Anonymous, How can 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 a life 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 callers have of our fellowship. A voice of attraction to the new person calling us for help may be their first step toward finding a new way of life in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

During regular ETIAA business hours the phones are answered at your Intergroup 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 automatically forwarded to the service worker’s phone, and their personal number is not available to the caller.

If you are interested in this most basic and vital area of service, contact Intergroup for information on how to join the phone committee and sign up for a time slot.

### Important Reading 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 the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions apply to your efforts to carry A.A.’s message of hope. Please read (or reread) the following:

1. AA At a Glance.
2. Information on Alcoholics Anonymous (white copy, both sides)
3. A.A. Tradition-How It Developed, By Bill W.
4. The Twelve Traditions Illustrated
5. Understanding Anonymity
6. Chapter 7 – Working with Others (AA 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:

- Be available for your shift.
- Answer by saying “Alcoholics Anonymous, how can I help you?”
- Assist in finding A.A. meetings for the caller in their area.
- Understand that you are not here as a 12 Stepper but do offer to have someone (from the 12 Step list) contact those who would like someone to talk to about A.A. at length.
- Be prompt as possible with each call in the event Intergroup telephones become busy.
- Keep language clean and in good taste.
- Do not flirt or make off color comments.
- Do *not* express opinions, take sides in controversies, or say anything that would reflect poorly on Alcoholics Anonymous or the Intergroup Office. Keep the traditions foremost in mind when answering phones.

### IMPORTANT!

- Never give out any person’s phone number, including your own.
- Never give out names, telephone numbers, addresses or other personal information regarding any A.A. member.
- Never give medical advice.
- Never recommend any treatment program or Facility.
- Never call the police on or for a caller. However, there may be some unusual life-threatening situations which may require a call to 911.
- Minimize personal calls. It is important to keep lines open for the next call for help.
- **Remember**, we are Alcoholics Anonymous and nothing else, and as such we carry 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 the caller is requesting specific meeting information, inform them of the closest and/or soonest meeting 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 we are in no way affiliated with the court or any other outside entity.

*3<sup>rd</sup> party calls:* Frequently a 3<sup>rd</sup> party who is concerned about a loved one’s drinking calls for help. It is often useful to refer this person to Al-Anon – Alateen Family Groups and ask them to encourage the drinker to call us for help themselves.

*Information about A.A.:* Assist the caller as best you can or refer them to the staff during office hours. It’s OK to not have an answer for all callers’ questions.

*Information on other 12 Step programs:* For anyone seeking information on 12 Step programs other than A.A., refer them to TN Redline’s 24hr hotline, 1-800- 889-9789.

*Requests for a ride:* Intergroup **does not** provide a ride service. We can only ask that someone from the 12 Step list return the call as a 12 Step call. Whether that person gives them a ride or not is entirely up to them.

*Prank Calls:* At times 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 a call.

## The Call for a 12 Step:

The dual necessity for diplomacy and speed is a difficult balance to attain. The situation usually dictates the methods. Experience will develop in a service worker a feeling for each caller and their circumstances.

There are some situations when a call back 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 their drinking, offer to have a member of A.A. call them back with more information and assistance. If the caller is willing to receive a call-back get some information from them for the person who will call them back.

1. First name.
2. Telephone number.
3. General location.
4. Date and time.
5. If the caller is drinking now/ current condition.

Tell the caller:

1. A sober member of A.A. will call them back in 15 minutes.
2. That they should call back if not contacted by an A.A. member.
3. That they may call anytime, 24/7, especially before taking a drink.
4. **Never give a member's phone number to a caller. Always assign a same sex 12 Stepper.**

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 12 Step service worker; you may have to make a few calls before someone is available.

Once an available service worker is found, ask if they can contact the person within 10 minutes. If they are willing provide the 12 Step service worker with the information from the caller. Remind the service worker to never 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 who answers says they no longer want to be a service worker, please let the phone coordinator or the office know.

## 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 a 12 Step call.

- Be available and call back promptly to arrange your visit. Be sure to get directions.
- When returning a call dial, \*67 before their number to conceal your personal phone number.
- NEVER go alone. ALWAYS get someone to go with you, a sponsor or sponsee is a good choice.
- 12 Step calls have been made to motel rooms, private homes and hospitals. If the prospect is currently sober you could arrange to meet them 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, however in an extreme emergency a man/woman team may call on either.
- Be patient, compassionate and listen. Share freely of your experience – especially of 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 in 12 Step work.

## 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 Local Emergencies 911**

**ETIAA Hotline 865-522-9667**

**District 2 Hotline 423-928-0871**

**Bridging the Gap 865-272-9526**

**TN REDLINE 800-889-9789**

**SAMSHA 800-662-HELP**

**Local Suicide and Crisis 988**

**National Suicide Hotline 800-273-8255**

**Knoxville Suicide Hotline 865-523-9124**

**National NA Helpline 866-617-1710**

**Knoxville AL-ANON 865-525-9040**

**DAA 865-245-5129**