

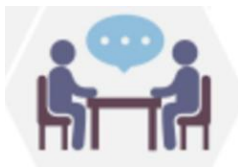
Guidelines

The Shared Experience of Al-Anon Members

Introductory Meetings

“Introductory meetings can be held at institutions such as hospitals, treatment centres and shelters, or any other location where families and friends of alcoholics gather. Attendance changes frequently. Such a meeting is not considered an Al-Anon Group and does not have its own Group Representative. Experienced Al-Anon members share the responsibilities for conducting Introductory meetings and for inviting those in attendance to try a regular Al-Anon/Alateen meeting. Al-Anon Groups, directly or through their District, are encouraged to help with the cost of literature and other expenses for Introductory meetings. Members must comply with the security requirements for the meeting location.” Al-Anon UK & Eire Service Manual P97

WHAT IS AN INTRODUCTORY MEETING?



Al-Anon Introductory meetings are held at institutions to explain to potential members what Al-Anon is and how it can help. These meetings are generally open only to the residents and

their families; thus, membership is transient, and these Groups should register with the Al-Anon General Service Office as an Introductory Group.

Experienced Al-Anon members lead the meetings and refer families to Groups near their homes. The responsibility for an Introductory Group may be divided among the Groups in a District or a few nearby Groups. An Introductory meeting does not have a Group Representative (GR). Transient members will have Area Assembly representation from their home Group GR.



WHAT IS AN INSTITUTION?

In this context, an institution is generally a residential facility, with limited access to the public. Such facilities include:

- Treatment centres (which may also offer outpatient treatment).
- Hospital alcoholism units.
- Prisons and juvenile detention centres.
- Group homes and halfway houses.
- Shelters and refuges.

HOW DO WE INTRODUCE AL-ANON?

The Al-Anon presence may vary in each type of facility. It can be in the form of contact with administrators of a facility, clarification of the Al-Anon programme and philosophy, open meetings, speakers, a literature table, poster displays or the formation of an Introductory meeting. Perseverance is the key. It may

take some considerable time before a reply is received or permission given, but follow up the initial enquiry at regular intervals.

PUBLIC INFORMATION IN AN INSTITUTION

Groups are encouraged to support PI in institutions, bearing in mind the need for an overall unified approach to Public Information.



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION IN INSTITUTIONS?

- Public Information is aimed at informing the public through the media, professionals and institutions about who we are and what we do.
- To introduce the Al-Anon programme to the families and friends of alcoholics in treatment centres, prisons or other residential facilities.
- To share with those in the institutions what it is like to live with someone suffering from alcoholism and how Al-Anon has helped us.
- Al-Anon's experience has shown that a greater percentage of family members visit an institution than are confined to one.
- To inform professionals at institutions who work with families of alcoholics about Al-Anon.
- To encourage the facility to use Al-Anon as a resource.
- To help clients and their families find Al-Anon after they leave the facility by providing some literature sign posting to the website.

HOW WOULD YOU START AN INTRODUCTORY GROUP?

Write a brief letter to the institution outlining the purpose of Al-Anon, enclose appropriate pieces of Al-Anon/Alateen literature. Request an appointment to discuss the Al-Anon programme further and ask if posters and literature may be left on display. Discuss the possibility of starting an Introductory Al-Anon Group at the institution.

WHAT IS THE SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR INTRODUCTORY MEETINGS?

These meetings are for the purpose of explaining to potential members what Al-Anon/Alateen is and how it can help. As membership is likely to be transient, the Group does not have a Group Representative.

The suggested format for meetings is as shown in the Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire Service Manual.



Open Meetings:

An open meeting has a chairman and usually two speakers who tell their own stories of recovery. The chairman briefly explains the Al-Anon programme (literature, telephone sharing with others and attendance at meetings) and then introduces the speakers. Professionals and other interested people may attend.

Closed Meetings:

These meetings are attended only by those qualified for Al-Anon membership. A closed meeting is led by an Al-Anon member who speaks briefly on a topic that will introduce newcomers to the Al-Anon programme.

Suggested topics are:

- The First Step.
- Slogans.
- Alcoholism – a threefold family disease.

Staff or professionals will occasionally attend closed meetings and might inadvertently try to become leaders of the Group. If this occurs, the focus could shift away from the Al-Anon philosophy. It is important that those members who are leading the discussion adhere to Traditions and stay with the chosen topic of the Al-Anon meeting.

NB Service at an Introductory Group should not become a substitute for regular attendance at your home Group meeting.

HOW ARE FUNDS RAISED?



Whether or not a collection should be taken is at the discretion of the member leading the meeting. Groups in the District and Area may help with meeting expenses. Tradition Seven states that we are self-supporting declining outside contributions so no fees may be accepted from the facility to help with funding for meetings.



If AA is also meeting at the same facility, it is advisable to co-operate with the AA Group secretary.

REGULAR AL-ANON MEETINGS HELD AT AN INSTITUTION

Some Al-Anon Groups meet in institutions permanently and welcome those visiting the institution to see a family member or friend who is suffering from alcoholism.

Meetings that are open to local members and held in institutions are not considered to be Introductory meetings.



Two or more Groups can successfully hold meetings independently at the same facility. One may be an Introductory meeting with transient membership; the other may be a home Group meeting for members in the community who find the location convenient.

An advantage to establishing a regular meeting at the facility is that it ensures the Al-Anon presence will be there and accessible. These meetings, like all regular Al-Anon meetings, have Group Representatives.

If there is no Introductory Meeting in the institution it is a good idea for the permanent meeting to have a good stock of PI and newcomers' literature that they can hand out as necessary.

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