

**MSCA 09 BRIDGING THE GAP
SUGGESTED TRAINING GUIDELINES FOR
TEMPORARY CONTACT VOLUNTEERS***

Suggestions for How to Be a Temporary Contact

- 1.) Be an A.A. member enjoying a comfortable, stable sobriety, have worked the steps and have a sponsor, for at least a year.
- 2.) Try to make direct personal contact with the client while they are still at the facility; either by telephone, by visiting the facility, or by attending a meeting together in the facility.
- 3.) Make every effort to attend at least one meeting together on the day of the client's release.
- 4.) Endeavor to take the newcomer to several meetings, over one to two weeks, introducing him/her to other A.A.'s, especially members who might have similar backgrounds or interests.
- 5.) Familiarize the newcomer with A.A. Conference Approved books, pamphlets, and a local meeting schedule.
- 6.) Explain sponsorship and the importance of having a reliable sponsor to assist in working the steps of A.A., relying on your story to help the newcomer to identify with this experience. (The A.A. pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship" is suggested as a useful reference.)

A.A. Bridging the Gap Temporary Contact Suggested Actions

A Temporary Contact is a member of Alcoholics Anonymous who assists alcoholic patients or inmates "Bridge the Gap" between the facility and "outside" A.A. meetings. Assisting the newcomer aids the Contact's own sobriety and demonstrates A.A.'s Singleness of Purpose. The Contact's primary purpose is to introduce the newcomer to AA meetings near the newcomer's home.

The Temporary Contact program is 100% successful simply by virtue of its own existence and availability to the newcomer. Always, the guidelines should be: "... When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."

The following paragraphs are suggestions to guide the Contact through events as they might happen. Other Hints and Hazards are outlined on the reverse side.

BEFORE DISCHARGE: A newcomer's request for help and contact information will be given to you from the MSCA 09 or District Contact Coordinator. You are responsible for reaching out to the newcomer via phone or mail as permitted by the facility in sufficient advance time to introduce yourself and make arrangements to meet. If the newcomer is incarcerated, familiarize yourself with the facility's rules, and the A.A. pamphlet Corrections Correspondence, F26.

DAY OF DISCHARGE: Make every attempt to meet the newcomer and attend an A.A. meeting together on the day of discharge. This greatly increases the chance of later attending an "outside" meeting together.

SCHEDULE THE MEETING: Guarding anonymity, call the newcomer on the day of discharge and make an effort to attend a meeting together, preferably the same day. Agreeing to pick the newcomer up from home is more successful than arranging to get together at the meeting place.

PICK UP: Take another A.A member with you whenever possible, as with all 12 step calls. Carry some literature with you in case there is none at the meeting. Newcomer literature packets made up of free pamphlets such as "Information on Alcoholics Anonymous," "A.A. at a Glance," or "A Message to Teenagers," along with a meeting schedule are handy and can be prepared ahead of time. Be on time for whatever appointment is made.

EN ROUTE TO THE MEETING: Keep the general conversation to AA related matters; Explain your role as a Temporary Contact, in contrast to being a sponsor. Explain both temporary and permanent sponsorship, and that members feel honored and usually accept when asked, unless they are sponsoring too many already.

BEFORE THE MEETING: Take time to introduce the newcomer to as many A.A members as possible. Encourage the newcomer to get phone numbers. If displayed, draw attention to any A.A. Conference Approved literature and A.A books for sale. Explain "Home Group," and make sure the newcomer receives a meeting schedule. Circle the meetings you attend.

DURING THE MEETING: Discreetly mention that there are no dues or fees, but if desired, a contribution to the basket may be given. Also, explain that sharing is not required but can help the group get to know the newcomer, and that members are glad to see newcomers.

AFTER THE MEETING: If there is fellowship after the meeting, invite the newcomer to join the "meeting after the meeting." While there, try to include them in the conversation.

RETURN TO THE RESIDENCE: Assume the newcomer is confused about most of what has been said and heard. State that we try to "Keep it Simple," and take just "One Day at a Time." Offer a ride to the next meeting, preferably one within the next few days.

Hints:

- Due to Confidentiality policies and schedules, visiting a newcomer in a facility may prove to be impossible. If feasible, and before discharge, attend the facility A.A. meeting where the newcomer may be sharing.
- When calling a newcomer's home, remember that someone else may answer the phone who may not know about the newcomer's desire to attend an A.A. meeting. Protect his or her anonymity by not disclosing your own association with A.A. or your purpose for calling.
- After discharge, the newcomer may have changed his or her mind about BTG assistance. Consider your responsibility ended after three attempts to telephone over several days result in no commitment (no direct phone connection with the newcomer, the newcomer offers plausible excuses, is hesitant, or declines help). Leaving your phone number may prove helpful later.

- If you discover that inadvertently a nonalcoholic has been referred to the Temporary Contact Program, explain what A.A. is and is not. If already en route to a meeting, an open meeting might be appropriate. Suggest other possible sources of help.

Hazards:

Review the A.A. Fact Sheet (What A.A. Does and Does Not Do) and keep in mind the following:

- Don't solicit members, try to persuade anyone to join A.A., or furnish initial motivation for newcomers to recover.
- Don't make medical or psychological diagnoses, judgment about medications, engage in education or propaganda about alcohol, or provide domestic or vocational counseling.
- Don't provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money or other welfare or social services.
- Don't accept any money for services.
- Don't offer, or imply the offer, of any other service unless you personally want to perform that service.
- Don't become a long-term taxi service, unless you want to.
- Don't confuse the act of service with long-term sponsorship.
- Don't become involved in discussions about the newcomer's treatment. We have no opinion on outside issues.
- It may help to bear in mind that the goal of both A.A. and the treatment facility is the same - the recovery of the alcoholic.

Conclusion:

As a measure to strengthen the Temporary Contact Program, a Follow-Up Coordinator from the Treatment Facilities/Bridging the Gap Committee will contact you regarding the outcome of your efforts. Your feedback and ideas help to evaluate the health of the Temporary Contact program. You can help the coordinator gather feedback and complete the circle of service.

*Adapted from Montana Area 40 Bridging the Gap Workbook.