

Service provided by the Mid Southern California Area 9 Treatment Committee



BRIDGING THE GAP VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

A SHARING OF EXPERIENCE

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CONNECT ONLINE***

Bridging the Gap

MSC Area 9

Treatment Facilities Committee

P.O. Box 51446

Irvine, CA 92619-1446

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BRIDGING THE GAP VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

PURPOSE

The purpose of Bridging the Gap is to provide a Temporary Contact who helps alcoholics leaving treatment centers, hospitals, and correctional facilities make the transition from AA on the inside to A.A. on the outside in their home community.

Volunteer members of A.A., usually working in pairs, meet the newly released alcoholic and accompany them to an AA meeting. Generally, people of the same gender orientation work together. Like all 12th step work, this is never to be paid for.

VOLUNTEER

- Six months suggested sobriety.
- H&I work and Bridging the Gap volunteer Temporary Contact work cannot be done by the same person at the same facility.

READING MATERIAL

You can obtain these from your District BTG Chair, aa.org, or your Central Office:

- Bridging The Gap (GSO P-49)
- A.A. Fact Sheet (GSO SMF F-94)
- FAQ's on A.A. (GSO P-2)
- AA at a Glance (GSO F-1)

As a volunteer member of Bridging the Gap, your act of service consists of introducing an alcoholic to the local A.A. group or meeting. You need only take them to one meeting. Anything after this is your own choice.

GSO's Fact Sheet (F094) lists what A.A. does and does not do, important guidance for you as a volunteer, and is used in BTG facility presentations to establish an understanding of our program of service. We don't offer or imply to offer any other service unless we personally want to perform that service.

MAKING ARRANGEMENTS

Information will be given to you about someone in confinement or treatment who has requested to go to an A.A. meeting with another A.A. member when they are released.

You will need to make the arrangements with this confined person. Depending upon the facility they are in, this can be done by phone or, in some cases, like correctional facilities, only by letter.

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If you are not sure how to make arrangements, a Bridging the Gap committee member will be glad to help.

It is often very difficult for someone confined to reach out for help. We have found through experience that it is most important that we respond back immediately.

The responsibility for making the arrangements for the 12th step call will be entrusted to you as a volunteer.

THE 12th STEP CALL

You may be the first outside A.A. member your contact meets. Be on time for whatever arrangements you make.

Make sure you know ahead of time exactly where you will be meeting the contact, whether it is at their home or at the door of the facility when they are released.

An adult volunteer should not go alone if meeting a juvenile contact. As with any 12th Step call, it is also strongly suggested that you are accompanied by another member of A.A.

The person you are working with may decide that they are not alcoholic. In that case, it is all right to take them to an open AA meeting. You may want to direct them to another 12-step fellowship if appropriate.

If you were not able to make contact prior to them leaving the facility, call the preferred phone number they provided on the day of their return to their local community.

Experience has shown that the first day out is most crucial. Many distractions are common. When calling your contact, instead of asking if they would like to go to a meeting, it is all right to say: "We will be over tonight at 7:30 PM to go to an AA meeting." If they really do not want to go, they will let you know.

"I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there, and for that, I am responsible."

AT THE MEETING

Take time to introduce the person to as many AA members as possible. Try to include an introduction to the chairperson and/or secretary. Beyond this, try not to push your contact - some people are very shy.

Keep the general conversation to AA-related matters. Avoid becoming involved in discussions about your contact's treatment or confinement. We have no opinions on outside matters.

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Provide your contact with a meeting schedule. Suggestions for additional literature for your contact are:

- Do You Think You're Different?
- A Newcomer Asks
- Is AA for Me?
- Problems Other than Alcohol
- Questions & Answers on Sponsorship

AFTER THE MEETING

On your own, you may choose to take your contact to additional meetings, but you should avoid becoming a taxi service. Bridging The Gap is not sponsorship. This is traditional 12th-step work.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

For guidance in this kind of correspondence, see the A.A. brochure F-26 "Corrections Correspondence — a special kind of A.A. Service." Experience has shown that your full name, home address, and phone number should not be given to your contact. Check with your District Treatment Facilities Committee or local Central Office and see if you may use their mailing address. If no local PO Box is available, you may use the Area PO Box, which is:

Mid Southern California Area 09
Treatment Facilities Committee
P.O. Box 51446
Irvine, CA 92619-1446

Also, include an additional line such as:
Attn: William W. City of Long Beach District 4. (Use your first name and last initial along with your city name and your district if you know it). Your return mail will be forwarded to your district and then to you.

TREATMENT FACILITIES

Some Treatment Facilities allow phone calls to and from their patients. This can be the easiest way to make arrangements with your contact. If you communicate with your contact through a facility staff member, some things to remember are:

- Please be courteous with any staff. It is a privilege for us to communicate with those on the inside.
- We have no opinions on treatment or procedures with patients.

HOSPITALS

Some hospital staff have concerns that AA volunteers will persuade newly released patients to quit their medication. You may need to explain that AA does not give medical advice and has no opinion on 'outside issues.'

A.A. guidance can be found in "The A.A. Member - Medications & Other Drugs" (P-11)

Do's:

- Do have ID & Clearance.
- Do know and abide by the dress code. No shorts, tanks or crop tops.
- Do keep your commitment.
- Do be on time for meetings.
- Do be a good example of AA and H&I.
- Do respect the "Don'ts".
- Do enjoy being of service.
- Do carry the message, not your mess.
- Do have an understanding of the 12 traditions.

Don'ts:

- Don't use profane or vulgar language.
- Don't discuss drugs or narcotics.
- Don't promise jobs or financial help.
- Don't romanticize alcoholism.
- Don't give prolonged "drunk-a-logs".
- Don't take any articles in-or-out.
- Don't give your address or phone number.
- Don't dress inappropriately.
- Don't be a taxi service.
- Don't worry. God's in charge.



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