

Pre-Conference Workshop Information

All A.A. Members are Welcome

The Pre-conference Workshops are held to provide the San Diego-Imperial Area General Service Representatives (GSRs) with information on agenda items for this year's General Service Conference (GSC). These sessions directly support the work of the GSR, which "...may be the most important job in A.A." Workshop handouts can be found on the **Delegate's Corner** page at <http://www.area8aa.org/area-information/delegates-corner/>

You can expect to learn:

- **The details of the specific items to discuss with the group's members in preparation for the Pre-Conference Assembly on April 2, 2016.** Nine (9) out of the 57 GSC agenda items will be presented at the Pre-Conference Workshops. These items have been carefully selected in their relationship to maintaining our common welfare. If you have inquiries about other items on the agenda, contact me at area8contact@gmail.com.
- **Why discussion of Conference considerations is our responsibility as custodian of A.A. Traditions.**
- **How to hold discussions with your group in order to gather the full range of ideas held in the conscience of all participating group members so that you can bring it to the assembly.** Please see the attached service piece, *"How to Conduct a Sharing Session,"* SMF-111. http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/smf-111_en.pdf

**Pre-Conference Assembly
April 2, 2016
GSR Orientation 8 AM - Assembly 9 AM
Torrey Pines Christian Church
8320 La Jolla Scenic Dr., N.
San Diego, CA 92037**

Thank you for your participation in our Third Legacy of Service

Fulfilling our responsibility to the group is what our 3rd Legacy is all about. It means each of us becomes informed on the thought and spirit of what we are deciding, actively engage in contemplation to seek the best answer for right now, and then engaging in group discussion to arrive at the best answers in service to our primary purpose — to stay sober and help others to achieve sobriety.

Discussions with Your Group

There are several ways to engage your group in the General Service Conference. You may decide to present one or two items to your group; or you may want to discuss several or them. Please keep in mind you have through April 1, 2016 to work with your group to prepare for the Pre-Conference Assembly. You don't have to do it all at one session. You may even think about circulating copies of the items and ask members to write down their thoughts for you. (A copy of this document and the Pre-Conference Workshop handout can be found under the Delegate's Corner at www.area8aa.org.)

Here are a few general questions to help kick-off your group's discussions. The handout has questions that are specific to the topic on the respective slide. Please know, once the ice is broken, group members are usually more than happy to share their thoughts.

Sample General Questions

1. Has anyone read or is familiar with this pamphlet? If there is no one, you may consider asking a couple members of your group to read the pamphlet and report to the group.
2. Which pieces of literature or pamphlets helped you as a newcomer?
3. Which pieces do you make use of now that you are no longer a newcomer?
4. Are there any specific pamphlets you recommend to anyone?

Inclusion – A.A.'s Relevance -- Conference Efficiency

Communicating to the Fellowship on the GSC agenda items, Advisory Actions, and the work of the committees at all levels of our service structure is one of our area's purposes. As custodians of A.A. Tradition, our work is to purposefully inform and educate the Fellowship on the application of A.A. Traditions and Concepts. The nine 2016 items General Service Conference (GSC) agenda items selected for presentation at our Pre-Conference Workshops generate discussion on the ideas of Inclusion, A.A.'s Relevance, and Conference Efficiency.

Inclusion: Inclusion is the 2016 topic of contemplation for the San Diego-Imperial Area Assembly. We have several agenda items that allow us to examine the language used in references pertaining to the differences in males and females; review our visual media to insure our communications illustrate all are welcome; and discuss considerations to those who are not English literate. To understand our diversity, see, "2014 Membership Survey," http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/p-48_membershipsurvey.pdf. http://www.aa.org/assets/es_ES/sp-48_membershipsurvey.pdf.

Relevance: Some items may give the impression that A.A. may not be not up-to-date as some of our 12-Step tools have not been updated for decades. An awareness of these items as well as the specific work to which they apply may be helpful in understanding how well we are communicating in today's world.

We are not on a membership drive; but It is important to note the number of members (worldwide) is not increasing. Please see Report "Estimated Worldwide A.A. Individual and Group Membership" (SM F-132) indicates a worldwide membership of 2 million. http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/smf-132_en.pdf. To put that number in perspective: 1. The CDC estimates there are 38 million binge drinkers in the U.S. <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/BingeDrinking/index.html>. 2. The Faces and Voices of Recovery Organization claims over 23 million Americans in long-term recovery <http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/who>.

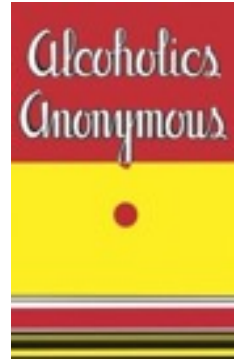
Conference Efficiency: There are a couple of agenda items that show a move toward building more efficiency at the GSC. These items will not be presented at the Pre-Conference Workshops as they are only at the point in the Conference process where they are reviewed by committee. However, I will report what is in the works and provide progress reports. These efforts are important to share with your group as they encourage participation in A.A. as a whole.

VI. A. Consider developing a Plain Language version of the Big Book, “Alcoholics Anonymous.”

Over time, there have been several requests for a Big Book written in Plain Language.

Summary of support in background:

- A Plain Language Big Book is equal to one written in a foreign language
- Valuable to those in Remote Communities
- Many people in prisons have poor literacy skills -- regardless of ethnicity
- Erosion of English and literacy due to spending more time on devices and less time reading
- Morphing of the English language through TV, movies, slang, texting
- Many in our upcoming generations have poor literacy rates
- English is the second language for immigrants to western countries who come from all over the world



The background includes a list of 23 Advisory Actions concerning changes to the big book. Some of these items were considerations for changes to the book Alcoholics Anonymous. In those cases, it was stated the first 164 pages, the Preface, the Forewards, “The Doctor’s Opinion,” “Dr. Bob’s Nightmare,” and the Appendices remain as is.

The origin of a consideration isn’t always relevant; but it may be in this case. The consideration comes from an individual who works with people from Remote Nations in Canada’s Arctic. The majority of indigenous tribal members are illiterate and have little understanding of English. In addition to the indigenous tribes, a high number of individuals from foreign countries have migrated to Canada making English is their second language. The background tells us the submitter’s view of a Plain Language translation is synonymous with translating it into the now nearly 70 foreign languages.

Outside of socio-economic conditions, English is continuously-evolving in structure and use. Younger generations tends to develop its own labels and “code” of expressions. A good example from the big book is the use of the word meditation. Does its use in the big book represent what we currently and frequently reference as the practice of Mindfulness; or is it referring to something more in align with what Jungian psychology refers to as Active Imagination? Or is it something else? Words are literally created to express actions occurring through use of technology. The word “texting” is a great example. Also, within what we know as texting, there is an entire body of abbreviations and new context for words to describe social interactions.

Suggested questions for your group members:

1. Would a Plain Language version help or hurt carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic?
2. Is a Plain Language version of the big book the same as translating into a foreign language?
3. Does a creation of another “English” version reduce the value or symbolic meaning of the actual big book?

Definition of Plain Language

Bryan Garner, from *Legal Writing in Plain English*, 2001, pp xiv <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/whatisPL/definitions/garner.cfm>

A word about "plain English." The phrase certainly shouldn't connote drab and dreary language. Actually, plain English is typically quite interesting to read. It's robust and direct—the opposite of gaudy, pretentious language. You achieve plain English when you use the simplest, most straightforward way of expressing an idea. You can still choose interesting words. But you'll avoid fancy ones that have everyday replacements meaning precisely the same thing.

IX. A.6. Consider removing the paragraphs on page 58 of Concept XI in “The Twelve Concepts for World Service”(BM-31), with the “male/female” distinctions.

It is important to note each Concept is an essay written by Bill W.

**These are the paragraphs being considered for removal from “Twelve Concepts for World Service”
Page 58:**

Women workers present still another problem. Our Headquarters is pretty much a man’s world. Some men are apt to feel, unconsciously, that they are women’s superiors, thus producing a reflex reaction in the gals. Then, too, some of us—of both sexes—have been emotionally damaged in the area of man-woman relations.

Our drinking has made us wrongly dependent on our marriage partners. We have turned them into “moms” and “pops,” and then we have deeply resented that situation. Perhaps maladjustment has taken still other turns which leave us with a hangover of hostility that we are apt to project into any man-woman relatedness that we undertake.

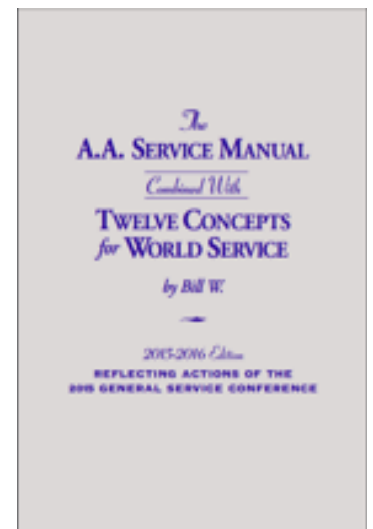
It is possible for these forces to defeat the good working partnerships we would like to have. But if we are fully aware of these tendencies they can be the more overcome and forgiven. We can be aware also that any sound working relation between adult men and women must be in the character of a partnership, a non-competitive one in which each partner complements the other. It is not a question of superiority or inferiority at all. Men, for example, because they *are* men, are apt to be better at business. But suppose we replaced our six women staff members with six men? In these positions could the men possible relate themselves so uniquely and so effectively to our Fellowship as the women? Of course not. The women can handle this assignment far better, just because they *are* women.¹⁰

Footnote to the subject paragraphs from page 59

¹⁰ These restrictions and gender distinctions ceased to apply in the late 70s when the first male staff member was employed, and later in the mid 80s, when the first female senior-level manager was employed. Today, six out of the eleven A.A. staff members are men, and half of the management team are women, reflecting a G.S.O. hiring policy based on ability, and unrelated to gender and in compliance with all applicable Equal Employment Opportunity and Fair Employment Practice laws.

Suggested questions for your group members:

1. What are your reactions to the expressed attitudes or beliefs expressed in the content of the paragraphs?
2. Do the attitudes or beliefs expressed serve as an attraction to service or A.A. as a whole?
3. Can you think of any other excerpts or references in A.A. literature that merit a similar consideration?
4. Is the credibility of Bill’s writings increased or decreased if this change is accepted?



II. A. Consider discontinuing the pamphlet “Three Talks to Medical Societies by Bill W.” (P-6)

Background:

The language and information are outdated making it irrelevant to medical professionals.

The 47 pages is too lengthy.

However:

The pamphlet is a very important piece of AA history.



Suggested questions for your group:

1. Is this pamphlet outdated?
2. Is any of the pamphlet's relevant information available in other pieces of A.A. literature?
3. Does this pamphlet have a place in A.A. literature- Unity, Service, or Recovery?

VI. H. Consider the request to include information on YPAA conferences in the pamphlet, “Young people and A.A.” (P-4). Last revised in 2007.

The specific request coming from an A.A. area was to create a new guideline “A.A. Guideline for Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (YPAA).” The AAWS board did not feel there was adequate need to create a new guideline. However, they did feel it would be helpful to include information on YPAA conferences in the pamphlet “Young People and A.A.” (P-4); so, they sent their suggestion to the trustees’ Literature Committee. The trustees’ Literature Committee sent the agenda item to the Conference Committee on Literature.



Suggested questions for your group members:

1. Does the pamphlet provide an attractive and fully informative overview of Young People’s A.A.?
2. Do the stories in this pamphlet serve to attract young people to A.A. today?
3. Are we better served with a revision to this pamphlet that includes information on YPAA conferences?
4. Does it need any other revisions?

VI. I. Consider request to update the pamphlet “The Twelve Traditions Illustrated.” (P-43)

Last revision was in 1971.

The background of this item details the impressions given by both the illustrations and wording of “how” to observe A.A. Tradition. It also states the pamphlet was created and not revised since 1971. This request for consideration started from a group that presented it to their district. From there it went to their area. It was discussed at the assembly and received a vote of substantial unanimity in support of submitting it as a 2016 GSC agenda item. The item was presented to the person on the Conference Coordinator desk at GSO. That person placed it on the agenda of the trustees’ Literature committee and they have now passed it on to the agenda of the Conference Literature Committee.



Suggested questions for your group’s discussion:

1. Do the illustrations make our Twelve Traditions easy to understand and actionable by most A.A. members?
2. Is it useful to include the long form as well as the short form of the Twelve Traditions?
3. What can be added or removed to increase the information about A.A. Tradition?

IV. D. Discuss material from A.A.W.S. Self-Support Committee (F-203);

AND




E. Review Self-Support Packet (F-19)

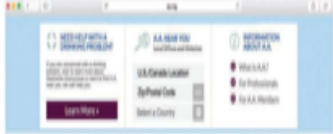
Link to A.A.W.S. Self-Support Committee ((F-203):


http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/f-203_en_seventhtraditionsfactsheet.pdf

YOUR SEVENTH TRADITION CONTRIBUTIONS
Carrying Our Message Beyond Your Home Group

When you or your home group contributes to the General Service Office (G.S.O.), your contribution helps an alcoholic around the corner or around the world. Here are some of the ways that happens:

-  The G.S.O. Publishing Department has coordinated translations of the Big Book in 68 languages and translations of other A.A. literature in more than 80 languages. Further translations are constantly in process.
-  Each year G.S.O. staff responds to over 90,000 emails, letters, and phone calls from A.A. members, suffering alcoholics, professionals, students, the press and others interested in A.A. Thus accurate and consistent information about A.A. is provided.
-  Staff communications often help someone find local A.A. meetings, link members in service, and support the start of A.A. in countries where there are no A.A. meetings.



 G.S.O. maintains and updates the aa.org website that averages over 30,000 visits per day. The website provides information about A.A., including how to find A.A. in their community, and provides help to members and those seeking help with their drinking problem, as well as to families and friends of members seeking help and understanding.

Suggested questions for your group members:

1. Do these materials inform us of what makes our 7th Tradition spiritual?
2. Does your group fully understand all 12-Step services that are supported by their contributions? i.e., the district, the area, GSO, as well as our other local service boards and committees?
3. How and who delivers information to our group on the financial standing of all our service boards and committees?

VIII. E. Discuss a request to reconsider the 2011 Advisory Action regarding the “Policy on Actors Portraying A.A. Members or Potential A.A. Members in Videos Produced by the General Service Board or its Affiliates.”

The comments from the area’s letter for reconsideration include:

- “The current policy follows Traditions 11 and 12.”
- “Our group wants to be sure that everyone knows that our deaf members need to have facial expressions to accurately understand the message. We feel that the full faces should remain; it is common to have a disclaimer that the people in the video are actors.”

In considering the deaf members of the San Diego-Imperial Area, would it be more helpful to their full comprehension of the video if full faces of the actors are shown?

Please note it will be helpful to view the videos listed in the Examples to understand if or how well the current videos in circulation follow A.A. Traditions 11 and 12.

CURRENT POLICY:

Policy on Actor Portraying A.A. Members or Potential A.A. Members in Videos Produced by the General Service Board or its Affiliates

Videos produced and distributed by the General Service Board or its affiliated corporations, A.A. World Services, Inc. and A.A. Grapevine, Inc., that include actors portraying A.A. members or potential A.A. members shall not show the actor’s full face, unless:

- a) The General Service Board, by substantial unanimity, agrees that the proposed video is consistent with the A.A. tradition of attraction rather than promotion, and that such use of an actor or actors does not in fact or in appearance place personalities before principles, and
- b) the General Service Conference authorizes by substantial unanimity, the production and distribution of such video.

For the purposes of this Policy, a “video” is any item of visual media in which a live actor appears, regardless of the medium in which the video is presented (DVD, film, electronic file, etc.).

For the purposes of this Policy, a potential A.A. member is a character in a video who is portrayed as seeking help from A.A., or who is portrayed as the recipient of Twelfth Step work in any form.

EXAMPLES:

1. The video named “Hope.”

In the new **Hope** video, however, we have for the first time actors portraying A.A. members who in fact turn and speak directly to the camera. One interpretation of this scene is that the character being portrayed is an A.A. member who knows and acknowledges he is being filmed. For a member knowingly to allow such a filming would be a clear violation of the Eleventh Tradition. Another interpretation is that the character is not being portrayed as speaking into the camera; he is being portrayed as speaking to an unseen person behind the camera, namely the viewer. The presence of the camera is never fully acknowledged. In either case, however, the fact that the character is speaking introduces an additional factor of “personality” into the equation, which may suggest that personalities rather than principles are being emphasized, and that the character is not practicing a genuine humility.

Instructions for accessing the videos listed below are within the following text:

2. A.A. Video for Employment/Human Resources Professionals
3. A.A. Video for Healthcare Professionals
4. A.A. Video for Legal and Corrections Professionals

These 5-minute videos are available for viewing on aa.org from the portal “Information on A.A.,” under the heading “A.A. Videos for Professionals,” and are thus viewable by the public. They are not included in the A.A.W.S. catalogue. Each has an oral and written disclaimer at the beginning and at the end of the video stating that actors are portraying A.A. members. Full faces are shown of actors portraying A.A. members attending A.A. meetings and consulting with professionals. The characters have no speaking parts and do not look into the camera or otherwise communicate with the viewer of the video. All speakers in the video are professionals who are not members of A.A. The “voice over” speaker does not identify himself as an A.A. member.

To access the PSA, “I Thought,” go to www.aa.org and enter the title in the search box.

5. We Know What It’s Like (Public Service Announcement)

In the one minute version of this PSA, the concluding shot suggests picking up the phone to call A.A., and then shows the full face of a person answering a phone. The shot is not included in the shorter versions of the P.S.A.

The PSA “I Thought” is ambiguous. It shows full faces, but it is not clear that the actors are portraying A.A. members. There are several shots where the character is clearly an A.A. member, and in these cases less than full face is shown.

The current practice of the Trustee Public Information Committee is that no full faces of actors portraying A.A. members are shown in public service announcements. Actors portraying a character with a drinking problem are shown in some, but not all, of the current PSAs.

Suggested questions for your group members:

1. Does the 2011 Advisory Action take into consideration how to carry the message to the deaf community?
2. Is the quality of ASL interpretation dependent upon the interpreter’s facial expression?
3. What is the best solution in order to include our deaf members AND respect of A.A.’s Twelve Traditions?

II. B) Consider adding text regarding A.A. Members and medications to the pamphlet, “If You are a Professional.” (P-46)

...to suggest that when patients say they cannot take prescribed drugs because they are a member of AA, the doctor can refer them to the pamphlet, “The AA Member - Medications and Other Drugs.” (P-11)

Draft text for new section in the pamphlet “If You are a Professional...”(page 5 beneath the Singleness of Purpose and Problems Other Than Alcohol” section):

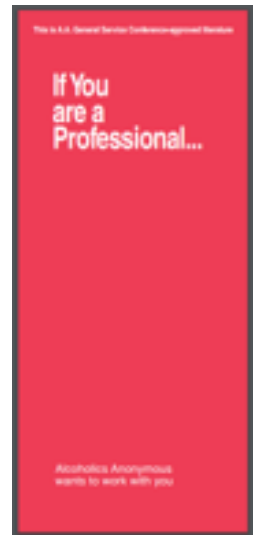
A.A. Members and Medications & Other Drugs

No A.A. member should “play doctor”; all medical advice and treatment should come from a qualified physician. The suggestions provided in our pamphlet “The A.A. Member—Medications & Other Drugs” may help A.A. members find the right balance and minimize the risk of relapse.

Note: The draft text comes from existing language in the Conference-approved pamphlet “The A.A. Member—Medications and Other Drugs”

Suggested questions for your group members regarding “The AA Member - Medications and Other Drugs.” (P-11)

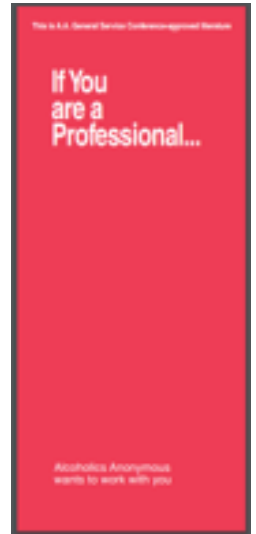
1. Is your group informed of this pamphlet as a resource?
2. Are the stories in this pamphlet currently relevant to the needs of A.A. members?
3. When and to whom would you recommend this pamphlet?



II. B) Consider adding text regarding A.A. Members and medications to the pamphlet, “If You are a Professional.” (P-46)

Suggested questions to ask your group:

1. What overall impression of the Fellowship do you feel the pamphlet gives to the professional community?
2. What do you think about the suggestion for doctors to recommend A.A. literature to their patients who disclose their A.A. membership?
3. Is the message “All medical advice and treatment should come from a qualified physician,” understood and practiced by your group’s members?
4. Are there any other considerations to make for change to this pamphlet?



II. D. Review draft revision of the pamphlet “How A.A. Members Cooperate with Professionals.” (P-29)

Suggestions to update wording:

Question 14 – Remove the words “Rest Homes”

Question 15 – Remove the words “Rest farms”

Question 17 – Replace the word “patients” with clients

Question 19 – Remove the words “an A.A. farm”

Suggested questions for your group members:

1. Are the word changes necessary?
2. For Open meetings: Are the members of your group aware of how their activities and practices send the message of cooperation to newcomers and visitors?
3. Does your group understand cooperation with professionals in terms of A.A. Tradition? (See page 12.)

