

To submit your group's events or news to the next issue of our newsletter please email [centraloffice@reddeeraa.org](mailto:centraloffice@reddeeraa.org) by December 15th, 2021

# Deer Tracks

We are self supporting and can only accept contributions from A.A. members.  
To contribute please email [centraloffice@reddeeraa.org](mailto:centraloffice@reddeeraa.org) Thank you for your support!



## Upcoming A.A. Birthdays 😊



### NOVEMBER

<b>Ashlene</b>	Happy Hour Group 5:15 PM	11/29/21	Ashlene will celebrate 1 year
<b>Ted</b>	Easy Does It Balmoral Group	11/28/21	Ted will celebrate 10 years
<b>Sharon</b>	Easy Does It Balmoral Group	11/28/21	Sharon will celebrate 8 years
<b>Janet</b>	Easy Does It Balmoral Group	11/28/21	Janet will celebrate 3 years
<b>Greg</b>	Mens Meeting 7:30 PM	11/29/21	Greg will celebrate 35 years

### DECEMBER

<b>Buck</b>	Easy Does It Balmoral Group	12/26/21	Buck will celebrate 41 year
<b>Kenny</b>	Easy Does It Balmoral Group	12/26/21	Kenny will celebrate 27 year
<b>Roy</b>	Easy Does It Balmoral Group	12/26/21	Roy will celebrate 14 years
<b>Kathy</b>	Easy Does It Balmoral Group	12/26/21	Kathy will celebrate 4 years
<b>Kevin</b>	Easy Does It Balmoral Group	12/26/21	Kevin will celebrate 7 years
<b>Yvonne</b>	Ladies Group 7:00 PM	12/30/21	Yvonne will celebrate 20 years

Suggestions always welcome at Central Office.

What would your groups like to see as a service, event, newsletter contributions?

Submissions Deadline For Next Issue  
DECEMBER 15TH, 2021

Deer Tracks 😊

## NEWS AND NOTES...

### AA Central Offices are Essential Services!

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### Intergroup/Central Office: Then and Now

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Recovery-themed word puzzle .....page 14

### Just for Fun

Submitted by NM .....page 15

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### Average Monthly Usage Stats

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### Featured Article

Step 5 .....page 19

**DEER TRACKS NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER**  
**FEATURED ARTICLE** is "STEP 5" (See Pages 19-22)

FREE A.A. PAMPHLETS WITH EVERY LITERATURE ORDER

Central office is fully stocked with all your literature, A.A. medallion/chips, etc. needs.

WE ARE FULLY SELF-SUPPORTING THROUGH THE DONATIONS OF A.A. GROUPS & MEMBERS.

Central Office is operated by A.A. members, serves A.A. members, and is financially funded by A.A. members. Thank you!

We sincerely thank you for your support as this is passed on to the newcomer and since New York is our supplier you're supporting them, too.

STAY WELL!



😊 DUE TO COVID-19 OUR OFFICE IS OPEN FRIDAYS 10 AM – NOON  
TEXT OR EMAIL TO BOOK ANOTHER TIME: Please text or call 587-377-1117 or email [centraloffice@reddeeraa.org](mailto:centraloffice@reddeeraa.org)

**CENTRAL SERVICE OFFICE RED DEER  
CELEBRATED 2 YEARS!**



**September 19, 2021!**

*Thanks for helping us carry the message  
Red Deer & Area!*

*Supporting your local central office helps newcomers  
and all money goes back into AA Helping the groups  
the unity and of course our supplier  
Alcoholics Anonymous World Services!*

Support your Local CSO! 587-377-1117  
One alcoholic helping another alcoholic, it works!  
<https://reddeeraa.org/>

**NEW! Prayer & Meditation**  
**PRAYER & MEDITATION BOOK**  
**NOW at Red Deer Central Office!**

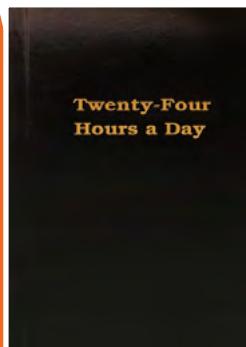


**PRAYER &  
MEDITATION**

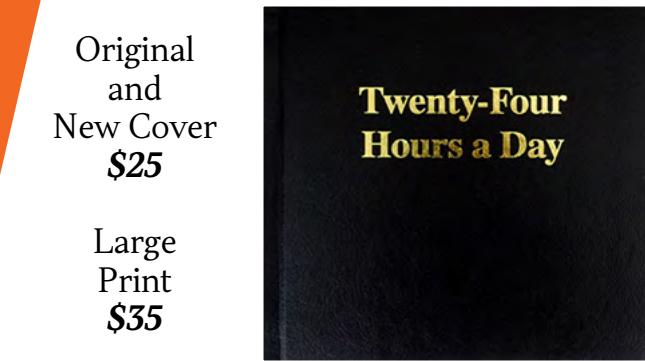
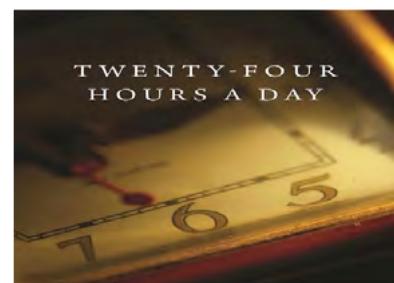
AA members share the many ways  
they connect spiritually

**Ladies Group**

Thursday Nights — 7 pm  
Sunnybrook United Church (est. 1995)  
sells 24 Hour books

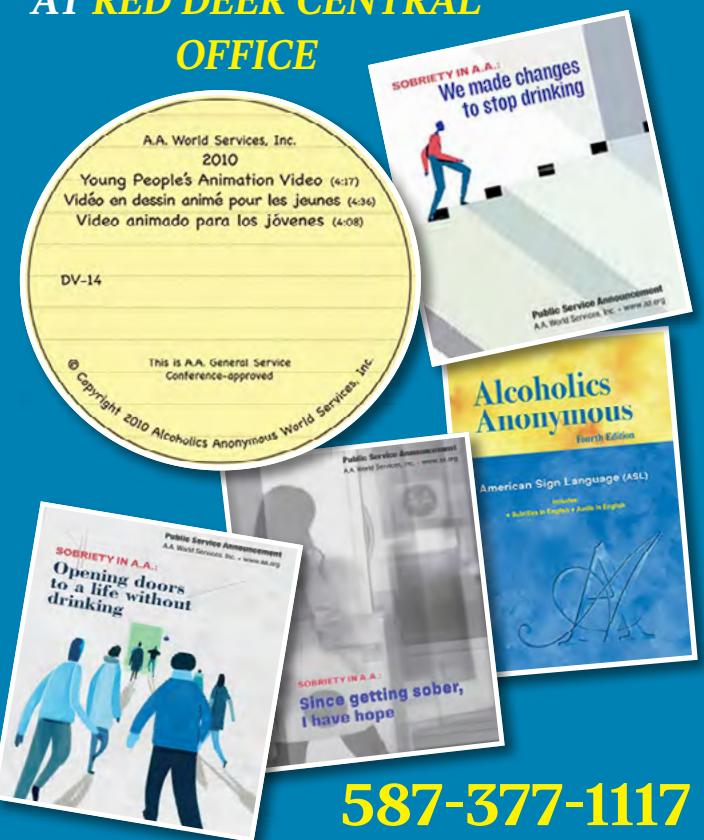


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**587-377-1117**

# AA Central Offices are Essential Services!

Red Deer CSO was established Sept 2019. Not knowing we were about to experience a pandemic, the start of CSO was a real blessing.

Our District was burdened with a huge phone bill annually and hardly any AAs were receiving 12-step calls anymore; the answering service handled most inquiries. Now we have numerous people come in and stay in AA in our city because of our new AA phone, with over 20 AA members answering the calls.

During the pandemic all meetings suddenly shut down and Zoom was not organized yet. Red Deer Central Office was able to utilize *Google Meets*, and three AA meetings went online immediately. Without missing any meetings, we were able to continue carrying the AA message.

Meanwhile, Zoom in New York was being prepared. To this day (18+ months later) two of these online Red Deer AA meetings are still in operation, and not only that we have visitors from out of country, too!

Many gifts came from Central Office, unity had grown, service positions filled, and AAs got together from all over the world. Literature was and is available 24/7 though Red Deer Central Office. AAs were answering the phone and calming people down and guiding them to the online meetings (this sometimes took lots of time and patience). Continuing to help the newcomers not get lost in the wake of it all was a real gift; the new people have joined groups and enjoy sobriety. Red Deer CSO was born just in the knick of time!

Our latest stats are on [page 18](#) of this newsletter. We have seen again its imperative AA works together and practices unity. Central Offices were introduced at AA's

very beginning and have been around for 85+ years. Red Deer CSO has a great location in the center of downtown Red Deer and serves over 20 groups and newcomers.

All the newest literature from AAWS/Grapevine AA is available, as well as meeting lists (online and local/out of town), walk in help where we let new people know what AA is about or how to activate/attend an online group, volunteer at service positions, enjoy fellowship and any other AA inquiries ... we have gladly been able to have enough resources to handle all requests. Red Deer Central Office has helped AAWS as our sales over the past two years were significant to help put a dent in their debt due to the pandemic.

All who participate and support Red Deer CSO are a part of AA as a whole and this is how it was meant to be from the beginning of AA's history; thus you are contributing to your own spiritual growth, sobriety, fellowship and unity.

Thankfully we have never had a financial burden. All the groups financially help or volunteer their time to make sure Red Deer Central Office keeps on growing and helping the alcoholic who still suffers. If you have participated or visited our office and contributed in anyway, we — and the newcomer — thank you.

**Please read the following two articles on Central Offices.** If you would like Red Deer CSO to continue to serve and carry the AA message please visit us in person Fridays, 10:00 am – noon, at the Old Court House. Please see our website: <https://redderarea.org/>

Thank you to all the AAs who worked very hard at CSO Red Deer.

You're appreciated! 

## ARTICLE 1: BOX 459 NEWSLETTER EXERPT: FALL 2017 ISSUE

[https://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/en\\_Box459\\_fall\\_2017.pdf](https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/en_Box459_fall_2017.pdf)

### ■ Intergroup/Central Office: Then and Now

Established and supported by local groups to carry out the functions of a centralized office, intergroups have provided thousands of desperate alcoholics with their first contact with Alcoholics Anonymous, either over the phone, in person, or, increasingly, online. With 469 intergroups/central offices listed with G.S.O. in the U.S./Canada alone (and nearly 700 worldwide), A.A. is so easily "searchable" these days that we often forget that, at one time, it played a little hard to get. Back in the early days, "A.A. wasn't that easy to find," wrote one oldtimer. "A carefully selected group of priests, judges and policemen knew about A.A.; our phone number wasn't listed, and it could be gotten only by dialing Information." This was a deliberate attempt to ensure that anyone wanting to get sober was sincere enough to make a real effort. But gauging the level of someone else's desire to quit drinking was an often subjective judgment that the Third Tradition fortunately did away with.

Intergroup Central Office: Then and Now

In the very beginning, there was the Central Committee in Cleveland, Ohio, where by October 1939 a group of seven members convened on a regular basis to coordinate efforts regarding hospitalizations and sponsorship, doing crucial work at a time when the slip of just one member or the dissolution of just one group seemed to threaten the very existence of A.A. itself.

What Bill W. called "A.A.'s first organized service center" — the forerunner of today's intergroup — sprang up in the Chicago suburb of Evanston. Around 1940, an A.A. member named Sylvia used the proceeds of her monthly alimony check to rent an apartment and establish a phone line. In 1941, after publication of the Jack Alexander article about A.A. in the *Saturday Evening Post*, Sylvia's apartment began to resemble, according to Bill, "a sort of Chicago Grand Central," with so many phone calls that Sylvia had to enlist the aid of Grace Coulter, a nonalcoholic secretary. Eventually, Sylvia and Grace upgraded

to an office in the Loop (only a few blocks from where the current Chicago Area Service Office now has its offices), where they welcomed, Bill wrote, “a stream of applicants for Twelfth Step attention, hospitalization, or other help.”

Most early intergroup offices were nowhere near as elaborate as this: they were simply phone lines listed as belonging to A.A. but that were in fact connected to members’ homes. But Sylvia’s office inspired the opening of numerous early intergroup/central offices all over the Midwest, notably ones in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Minneapolis, Minnesota.

On the East Coast, New York Inter-Group essentially started when the doors of the 24th Street Clubhouse at 334½ West 24th Street opened in June 1940 and began serving the members of Alcoholics Anonymous in the metropolitan area. By 1942, the Club, as it was called, began to serve as more than a meeting place and to function as a de facto central committee for over 20 A.A. groups, with two paid clubhouse secretaries who answered phones and manned the desk 12 to 14 hours a day. These were some of A.A.’s first “special workers,” as articulated in Tradition Eight, who were paid to make A.A. Twelfth Step work possible, as opposed to individual A.A. members who, on a voluntary basis, carry the message as part of their own Twelfth Step efforts. Eventually, in 1946, New York Inter-Group was established, moving away from the clubhouse (it was difficult to carry on the work of intergroup in a social atmosphere that included an endless poker game and, at one point, a restaurant) to a space on West 75th Street.

By the time of the first General Service Conference in April 1951, at least 16 intergroup/central offices were serving local groups. Since they predated the formation of the general service structure and performed a different A.A. function, they were not a part of the A.A. structure (except in Chicago, where the area service office and area committee are essentially one). At times over the years, there has been an overlapping of services, but, for the most part, intergroups and general service have come to work in harmony.

Matthew C., office manager of the Ventura County Central Office (VCCO), is the epitome of a contemporary intergroup/central office manager, dealing with all the rewards and challenges that this entails. The image of A.A. volunteers answering phone calls from suffering alcoholics, or A.A. members seeking a meeting or information, is still a relatively accurate one. “We rotate shifts of volunteers — we have at least one in the office at all times, and 60 to 70 willing to have calls forwarded to their homes after hours,” Matthew says. They get about 500 to 600 calls a month at VCCO, but this is down from previous years because of the Internet, which has proved, for better or worse, a game-changer for intergroup/central offices. Since so many people are bypassing phone calls and going to the VCCO website, the beta test site that Matthew is rolling out is geared heavily toward newcomers, opening with a banner that reads, “New to A.A.? Have Questions?” and a home page that addresses the most commonly occurring questions.

Matthew feels that there is a “certain comfort” about being able to explore the answers to questions individuals may have about their drinking without having to speak to someone, but there is also something that may be lost: “that one-on-one connection with another person. So, the

website does encourage people to call, 24/7.” When they do call, miracles can occur. Like so many of the intergroup/central office workers, Matthew has war stories. Once, an alcoholic attempting to detox himself called VCCO, certain that he was having a heart attack. “He was in bad shape,” Matthew says, “and after a long conversation we convinced him to call EMS and get to an emergency room.” Several years later, that same alcoholic — sober now — walked into the office and thanked them.

In Chicago, office manager Katie M. describes a very successful web presence for the Chicago Area Service Office (CASO). The website averages over 100,000 visits per month, and, out of these, roughly 26 percent are coming to the site for the first time.

Katie describes CASO as “an anchor” for the greater Chicago area and Cook County. “We have a bookstore, and all of our standing committees — like corrections, H&I, Grapevine, etc. — meet here in the evening, and other districts come down here to participate, so we connect people to the service structure.”

CASO does receive roughly 700 phone calls a month, Katie adds, but she senses that they are somewhat different from the intergroup calls of the past. “The majority of the calls are not necessarily people wanting to go to a first meeting, or to talk about their drinking problems. We get calls from social workers, for instance, who are trying to help alcoholics connect with a meeting, often a bridging-the-gap kind of thing.”

Like many intergroup/central office managers, Katie is concerned about the finances of the office. Like all intergroups, CASO acts as a clearinghouse for information about local groups and meetings and is directly responsible to the groups it serves. In turn, these groups provide volunteers for Twelfth Step work (i.e., answering the phones), supervise office policies and procedures via their intergroup reps, and offer financial support. CASO has a strong prudent reserve, but Katie is always looking for measures to cut costs, particularly since contributions from the groups have been declining. “Only 23 percent of the groups support the office,” Katie says, “and individual contributions [which can be up to \$3,000 annually] make up only 5 to 10 percent.” And e-commerce affects the way they can do business. “People can get the Big Book cheaper and faster from non-A.A. online stores than they can coming down here to the bookstore and purchasing it from us.”

One answer to this problem is outreach to the groups. Katie M. sends out an appeal letter every November, and intergroup reps discuss the need for financing at every area assembly. Pauline D., office manager of the Northern Virginia Intergroup (NVI), agrees on how crucial outreach is: “We had a terrible year a couple of years ago,” she says. So, we did a major outreach, letting people know just how intergroup works and how it is financed. We asked all of our intergroup reps to bring word back to their groups that intergroup needed their help. We really pushed Birthday Plans in November. And we had the intergroup chair visit each of the 14 districts we serve and talk about our mission. And that seemed to work very well for us.”

(Pauline and NVI are hosting the 32nd Annual Intergroup/Central Office/AAWS/AAGV Seminar, October 6-8 this year. This annual seminar provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and shared experience for those on A.A.’s front line. Attendees are intergroup/

central office managers, intergroup representatives, G.S.O. and Grapevine staff, and members of the A.A.W.S. and Grapevine Boards.)

Jennifer R., office manager of Miami-Dade Intergroup — an office with a long history, dating back to the 1940s — has seen the number of groups in the area decline. Phone calls to the hotline average only two or three a day, perhaps as a result of the website or the Meeting Finder app that many people use today. With so many groups closed and others facing increased rent, contributions to Miami-Dade Intergroup are down. Both Jennifer and another employee are part-time; despite this, they are incredibly productive, producing and distributing meeting directories, managing the website, selling A.A. Conference-approved literature, providing service materials, preparing a monthly newsletter, and making sure the phones are answered 24/7 by A.A. volunteers. Jennifer speaks Spanish, and one of her many jobs is cooperation with the Spanish-speaking intergroups, which do not have a separate office, but pass the phone from one group to another, one month at a time.

Young people coming into A.A. need to be educated about intergroup, Jennifer says, and need to learn to volunteer. An A.A. without intergroup would not be A.A., really. “If we are not here, if someone calls for help and there is no one to pick up the phone, then A.A. has failed them.”

Coco T., executive secretary of New York Inter-Group (NYIG), agrees that a thriving intergroup is incredibly important to the A.A. community it serves — in the case of NYIG, a community that includes 1,438 active groups registered with the NYIG office and 3,642 meetings in the meeting book. It’s no wonder that NYIG’s Seventh Avenue offices are open 365 days a year from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., with phone volunteers available from 9 a.m. to 2 a.m. “We don’t miss any opportunity to share our experience, strength and hope with other alcoholics,” Coco says, especially since the web has changed the intergroup paradigm. Up until August 2016, when their new A.A. meeting finder appeared on the website, NYIG averaged 4,500 to 4,800 calls a month. At that point, the calls were almost immediately reduced to 3,000 to 3,200 per month.

It’s a mixed blessing, of course. More and more people are able to find meetings quickly and efficiently, but, says Coco, the loss of 20 to 30 phone calls a day “is physically very noticeable. When alcoholics actually call on the phone for help, they get the benefit of the A.A. volunteer who may have been taking phone calls for five years and can really connect with another alcoholic. Now we get hundreds of emails asking us to make contact with a person about their drinking. It’s a challenge to answer these, and also removes the value of that one-to-one connection, the immediate Twelfth Step element.”

To provide human connection, Coco helps ensure that the NYIG office is a welcoming place. “There’s a library and an archives area where people can and do come from all over for a cup of coffee and to read a book and look at some historic items. You can check out a book if you want. No one is ever turned away. Even in an electronic age, we are committed to providing hard copies of every flyer we produce — not everyone, particularly homeless people, has access to the Internet.”

And the connection benefits not just the alcoholics reaching out to NYIG, but those 635 to 700 alcoholics with over one year of continuous sobriety who volunteer there. “You can’t stop these volunteers,” Coco says. “Even if there’s six feet of snow outside, they’ll be here.” She tells

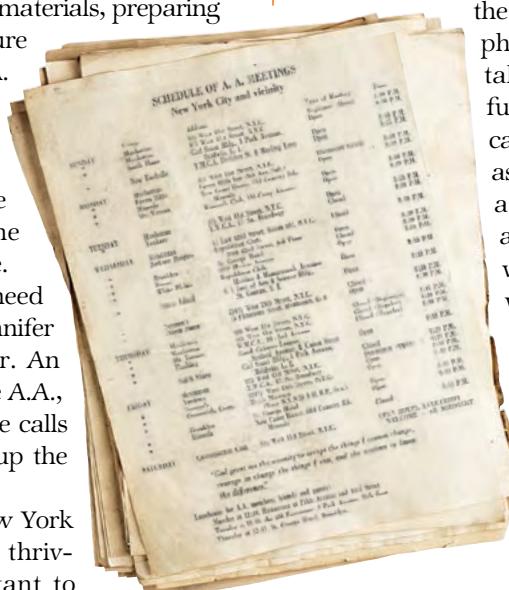
the story of one 90-year-old volunteer — a physician who knew Bill W., and used to talk about how he had tried, unsuccessfully, to get Bill to stop smoking — who came in once a week, year after year, even as his health failed, showing up dressed in a suit and tie. “He was a man of elegance and grace,” Coco says. “He used to tell his wife, ‘I have to go help people.’ His life’s work was to carry the message.”

The Area 87 Central Service Office in Montréal, Québec (which is hosting the 2018 Intergroup/Central Office/AAWS/AAGV Seminar), carries the message to both English- and French-speaking alcoholics. According to executive assistant Ginette W., their help line receives roughly 500 to 600 English-language calls monthly, with perhaps three times that many in French. “We are officially bilingual, but we also

have a Spanish-speaking presence,” Ginette adds. “There are about 12 Spanish-speaking groups locally that have their own intergroup, but we host them at our office and make literature available in Spanish.”

Like most intergroup/central offices, some of the phone calls the Area 87 Central Service Office receives are from alcoholics who are lonely and simply want to talk, which can be a drain on resources. “We never cut these calls off,” says Ginette, “but we work to direct these people to meetings, where real, face-to-face recovery can begin. We also have a group of volunteers who are willing to talk on the phone from their homes, which frees up our other workers.”

Replenishing the pool of volunteers is a constant concern. “We have to keep reminding groups that things don’t happen by magic in A.A.: there is hard work in carrying the message. Our area’s 27 districts have 550 groups, and we reach out to all of them via our newsletter and through intergroup reps going to meetings. We also make a point of educating groups about why we need money, not how much. We need to pay for literature, for phones, for the website. The A.A. message of recovery is free; for intergroup to pass it on costs money.”



New York Inter-Group's first meeting schedule — 1946.

Area 87 Central Service Office has a brand new website that features a special portal dedicated to newcomers. Ginette puts it simply: "We need to be where the people are. And, these days, people are on their computers and smartphones. So that is where intergroup has to go."

Many of those who have never had occasion to call intergroup (or who look up meetings on websites in strange towns without quite thinking of who is maintaining that website) wonder why they should support intergroup/central office with their financial donations. While cooperating closely with G.S.O. and local general service district and area committees, it is not unusual for intergroup/central offices to seem apart from the general service structure. However, as noted in *The A.A. Service Manual* (page S42), "Many areas find that a liaison between the intergroup/central office and the area committee is very helpful in maintaining good relations and communication. In some areas the liaison has a vote at the assembly; in others, a voice but no vote." And further, the General Service Office publishes Guidelines and other service material that share the accumulated experience of intergroups and central offices in the United States/

Canada and worldwide. These define an intergroup as "an A.A. service office that involves partnership among groups in a community — just as A.A. groups themselves are partnerships of individuals. It is established to carry out functions which are best handled by a centralized office.... It exists to aid the groups in their common purpose of carrying the Alcoholics Anonymous message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

According to Coco T., the NYIG office pays \$10,000 a month in rent alone — a relatively modest fee, considering Manhattan real estate prices, but not a stroll in the park either. When asked what the future might hold for intergroups, she replies, "We answer to the Fellowship; we are responsible to the groups. Ultimately, our future depends on them. I owe my life to Alcoholics Anonymous, and I would hope intergroup is always there."

As Matthew C. at VCCO sees it, the idea of intergroup is the idea of A.A. itself: "A suffering alcoholic talks to someone who is feeling the way they are feeling, who understands and has been through the humiliation they have experienced, who helps them know that they are not alone after all."

## ■ Living Cyber

At A.A.'s 10th International Convention in San Diego in 1995, a group of people who called themselves the Living Cyber Committee gathered in a hospitality suite. They knew each other, but many of them had never met, since their only encounters had been in early forms of online A.A. groups. Those unable to travel to San Diego were able to "virtually" attend the convention through the suite. Two major email groups, several groups from the major online services, and an Internet Relay Chat channel participated in uniting alcoholics from all over the world with the online members and visitors in the suite.

The Living Cyber suite was a great success, and the committee realized that, with the rapidly expanding Internet, alcoholics around the world would need an online version of a brick-and-mortar intergroup/central office. They formed the Online Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous (OIAA), which was registered in New Jersey in 1996. According to OIAA chair Vicki E., online intergroup provides "a centralized location where groups can come online and people can find the groups they need." Crucial to OIAA's function is a rigorous vetting policy. "Our policy and admission committee is very strict in vetting our groups before we register them — we need to make sure they are true A.A. groups, operating within our Twelve Traditions."

At any given time, OIAA may have more than 100 groups listed. They represent all types of meetings — email, chat, telephone, audio, video — for all different groups, including general discussion meetings (both open and closed); men's and women's meetings; meetings for those who for one reason or another can't leave home; meetings for those who are Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing; and meetings for atheists/agnostics, military and LGBTQ members. "All types of people come to online meetings," Vicki says. When she was training as a nurse and had to travel 50 miles to work, she was unable to get to her regular meetings and so went online. Now she mixes brick-and-mortar meetings with cyber meetings, depending on her schedule.

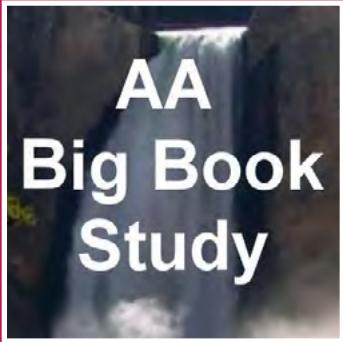
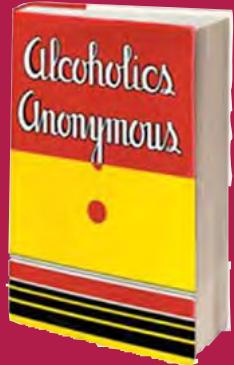
With meetings in 13 different languages besides English, OIAA is essentially an intergroup/central office for the online world. It functions along the lines of a regular intergroup, depending on Seventh Tradition contributions from its listed groups for expenses, with the usual number



of committees liaising with general service structures in the countries OIAA reaches. And, of course, the Twelfth Step function is central to OIAA's mission. OIAA's Twelfth Step Help Committee (known informally as "the Steppers") responds directly by email — 24 hours a day, in numerous languages — to anyone who clicks on the "Get Help" button on the OIAA site or the meeting sites it links with. According to Vicki, the Steppers answer some 300 to 500 emails a month from all over the world.

This Twelfth Step work, like any other, is crucial. "You are sometimes dealing with alcoholics who are feeling hopeless and you want to connect with them, get them help," says Vicki. "Even though you are on the Internet, you are working side by side with them." And, occasionally, there is that validating moment when the virtual world meets the physical one.

"I was at the San Antonio International Convention [in 2010], in our hospitality suite, when we had a man come in from Peru," Vicki relates. "Where he lived, he said, there were only three A.A. members, all 50 miles apart, and they could only meet once every three months, traveling by boat. Aside from that, his lifeline to A.A. was online meetings. So, people do stay sober, all over the world, against the odds. And that is what OIAA is there to help them with."



Please drop off used grapevines at Central Office as they are recycled to new alcoholics! Thank you for your help. 😊

## Annual LADIES BIG BOOK STUDY

Next study starts NOVEMBER 2021

### YOU GET:

- Fellowship
- An understanding of our illness
- Workbook to keep
- Unity
- An understanding of the traditions and promises

Online  
2021

### PLEASE BRING:

- Your big book • Highlighter • Willingness

Please Call or text 587 377 1117

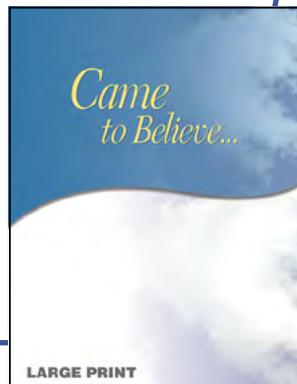
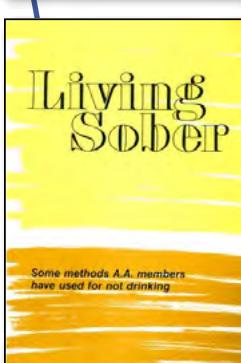
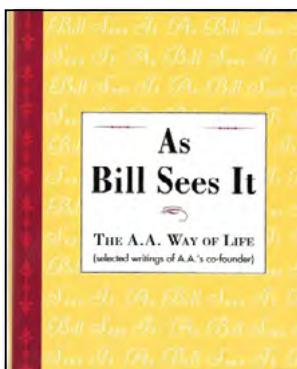
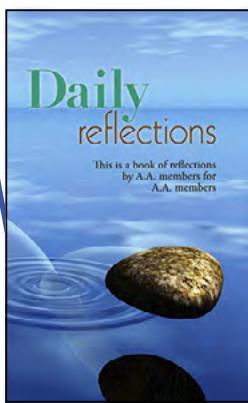


LADIES  
12 STEP AA  
*Silent  
Retreat*  
Please see us  
before  
JULY 2022  
to book!

Please see [sanctumretreat.ca](http://sanctumretreat.ca)  
to register.

## LARGE PRINT A.A. LITERATURE

- Came to Believe • Living Sober • 12x12,
- As Bill Sees It • Daily Reflections • Big Book



## Answer phones for Central Office

Volunteers in other areas  
needed!

Service keeps us grateful  
& sober



[https://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/aa-literature/  
p-44-aas-legacy-of-service](https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/aa-literature/p-44-aas-legacy-of-service)

# The Historical Role of Intergroups in AA

By Linda R.

## A FELLOWSHIP WITHOUT RULES AND REGULATIONS

Bill Wilson, AA's co-founder, wrote this in the July 1946 Grapevine:

**“So long as there is the slightest interest in sobriety, the most unmoral, the most anti-social, the most critical alcoholic may gather about him a few kindred spirits and announce to us that a new Alcoholics Anonymous Group has been formed. Anti-God, anti-medicine, anti-our Recovery Program, even anti-each other – these rampant individuals are still an AA Group if they think so! (Italics in the original.)**

The founders and early members of AA had a vision of a fellowship without rules, regulations, conformity and dogma. They had the confidence to believe that AA's lack of organization would ensure its endurance. This is why AA has Tradition Three: the only requirement for memberships is a desire to stop drinking. This is why AA has Tradition Four: each group functions autonomously by following its own conscience.

The spirit of AA is deeply anti-organizational and that is by design, not by accident or by an oversight that now needs to be corrected. That is why Traditions Eight and Nine explicitly define the role of service centers, boards and committees as providing service, rather than exercising any form of governance. Service centers, such as Intergroup / Central Offices, with their boards and committees, have no authority to impose rules or regulations on AA groups or individual AA members.

In an editorial "On the Ninth Tradition" published in the August 1948 Grapevine, Bill W. writes:

**“AA has always violently resisted the idea of any general organization. Yet, paradoxically, we have ever stoutly insisted upon organizing certain special services (italics in original); mostly those absolutely necessary to effective and plentiful 12th Step work. If, for instance, an AA group elects a secretary or rotating committee, if an area forms an intergroup committee, if we set up a Foundation, a General Office or a Grapevine, then we are organized for service.**

Traditions Eight and Nine remind us that the organized part of AA ought to be no more organized than is minimally necessary to maintain a service structure. We are not organized to impose governance, but we are organized for service.

The spirit that shaped Traditions Eight and Nine has often been threatened throughout AA's history, usually by fear.

Often, during the development of Traditions Eight and Nine in the 1930s and

1940s, there were arguments, sometimes contentious and boisterous. Many were fearful and sometimes became fearful to the point of preferring the certainty of rules, regulations, conformity, and dogma to the simplicity of a few basic principles and traditions. Those who were fearful pointed out that every nation, political party, church, corporation, benevolent association, in fact every form of society, had to have a government administered by human beings. The power to direct or govern was at the heart of all the organizations they saw everywhere. They asked whether it was even possible to have a fellowship that couldn't enforce obedience to rules and regulations, especially when the world around them demonstrated that every other organization gave authority to some of its members to impose obedience upon other members to follow rules and to expel offenders who violated the rules.

In spite of the fear that AA would fail without rules and regulations, the anti-organizational spirit of our founders and early members triumphed, and in July 1950 the first AA International Convention voted to adopt all Twelve Traditions. Thereafter, AA moved forward, in unity, understanding that as difficult as it might be to implement, our lack of organization was much preferable to its alternative.

The history of Intergroup / Central Offices is intertwined with the development of the Eighth and Ninth Traditions. These service centers are based on the organized for service principle outlined in these traditions. It is not only fascinating to read about the history of these service centers, but their history deserves a closer look, both by newcomers and outsiders alike, and occasionally even old-timers, who could benefit from knowledge of the minimally organized part of AA necessary to maintain a service structure.

## HISTORY OF INTERGROUP / CENTRAL OFFICES

The first forerunner to today's Intergroup / Central Offices, the Central Committee, was established in Cleveland Ohio in October 1939, four years after AA's co-founders Bill W. and Dr. Bob met. At that time a committee of seven – five men and two women – began meeting in Cleveland once a month. In addition to being the first Central Committee, this is said to be the first example of rotation in AA since one man and one woman dropped off each month to be replaced by the next in line according to seniority.

Cleveland's Central Committee was

established only five months after Cleveland's first AA group started on May 11, 1939. This AA group is considered group number three, forming as an offshoot of AA group number one in Akron (AA group number two was in New York). Clarence S., along with his wife Dorothy, and a group of about 11 others had previously been traveling regularly to Akron to attend the meetings of AA group number one. This group of 13 began meeting in the home of Abby G. and his wife Grace and by September membership had grown to 38, at which point the Central Committee was formed. "It's really functioning," Dorothy noted in her October 1939 letter to New York. "They appoint leaders, discuss tendencies, and arrange social affairs, and they are thinking of a masked dance for Halloween," she said. (Dr. Bob and the Good Old-Timers, Chapter 15)

At this point, Clarence S. came across Elrick B. Davis, a reporter for the Cleveland Plain Dealer and persuaded him to write a five-part series of articles about AA, which appeared in the latter part of October 1939. The articles were printed in the middle of the Plain Dealer's editorial page, along with additional positive articles by the editors themselves every three to four days. The newspaper's switchboard was deluged by requests for information about AA. The requests were relayed to Clarence S and his wife Dorothy and from them to members of their AA group. The volume of 12th step calls was tremendous, and the small group of AA's scrambled to meet the demand.

**“It was soon evident that a scheme of personal sponsorship would have to be devised for the new people. Each prospect was assigned an older AA, who visited him at this home or in the hospital, instructed him on AA principles and conducted him to his first meeting. But in the face of many hundreds of pleas for help, the supply of elders could not possibly match the demand. Brand-new AA's sober only a month or even a week, had to sponsor alcoholics still drying up in the hospitals. (Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, pp. 20-21)**

The Central Committee was utilized "to coordinate efforts regarding hospitalizations and sponsorship," according to Clarence S. "We met once a month, and then we decided to open an office," Clarence said in later years. "Up to then, we had a post office box and telephone." As Dorothy recalled, "When those articles hit Cleveland, people simply besieged the place. Our phone never quit ringing for about a month, and I did nothing but sit by the telephone and take inquiries." (Dr. Bob and the Good Old-Timers, Chap. 15)

Cleveland's response over the next year was the first example of how a service

structure can be effectively utilized when it's impossible for individual groups in an area to handle all aspects of twelfth-step work alone. It also started the shift from individual AA's seeking out alcoholics one-by-one, as was previously the case in Akron and New York, to one where alcoholics seek out AA in large numbers. The number of Cleveland AA members quickly grew and their meetings multiplied rapidly. In contrast, the membership numbers in New York and Akron remained relatively flat.

**“ We old-timers in New York and Akron had regarded this fantastic phenomenon with deep misgivings. Had it not taken us four whole years, littered with countless failures to produce even a hundred good recoveries? Yet there in Cleveland we saw about twenty members, not very experienced themselves, suddenly confronted by hundreds of newcomers as a result of the Plain Dealer articles. How could they possibly manage? We did not know.**

But a year later we did know; for by then Cleveland had about thirty groups and several hundred members. Growing pains and group problems had been terrifying, but no amount of squabbling could dampen the mass demand for sobriety. Yes, Cleveland's results were of the best. There results were in fact so good, and AAs membership elsewhere so small, that many a Clevelander really thought AA had started there in the first place. (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, pp. 21-22)

A month before the Cleveland Plain Dealer articles were printed, Liberty magazine, a national publication, had printed the article "Alcoholics and God", by Morris Markey.

The article generated 800 inquiries to AA "headquarters" in New York, which consisted of a post office box in New York and a small office in Newark, shared by Bill W., Hank P. and nonalcoholic Ruth Hock. All of the inquiries were responded to, almost single-handedly, by Ruth, who would later become the first AA National Secretary. Ruth wrote letters back to each of the individuals who had requested information about AA. She also maintained a list of these individuals, and would provide the names to members of AA who were traveling to an area where these individuals lived. The traveling AA member was expected to make 12th step calls based on the names on the list and help to start AA in that area. For example, when one of the New York members, Ray W., went to San Francisco in 1940 to take a sales course, he was given a list of inquiries from that area and asked to contact each person on the list:

**“ Ray had been an atheist and he still stuck to it. Nevertheless, he had been sober a couple of years and was broad-minded enough to take the AA book to San Francisco with him. We handed him a list of inquiries from that area which had been contacted by mail only. When**

*he got to San Francisco Ray began calling up these people, and a few of them gathered at his hotel. He said to them. “Now, boys, this AA is great stuff. It really saved my life. But there's one feature of it I don't like. I mean this God business. So when you read this book, you can skip that part of it. (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age Pages*, pp. 87-88)*

How an AA member performed their 12th step work was strictly their own business. The role of headquarters in New York was to arrange the 12th step call, but not to oversee or direct the content of 12th step work. A similar example occurred in the Philadelphia area. Jim Burwell, an atheist and the AA member credited with the origination of the phase "God as we understood Him" in the Big Book, was dispatched by headquarters on a 12th step call to Philadelphia. George S., a resident of Philadelphia, had read the Liberty article and written to New York. His name was given to salesman Jim B., who traveled that territory. Jim B. held the first AA meeting at George's home, and that's how AA started in the City of Brotherly Love – with an atheist's 12th step call. (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, pp. 17-18)

In March 1941, the Saturday Evening Post, another national publication, printed an article on AA, written by Jack Alexander, a well-respected journalist. This article generated 6,000 inquiries to AA's post office box in New York. Ruth answered these inquiries in the same way she had answered the inquiries generated from the Liberty article in 1939: writing letters and sending AA members on 12th step calls to these individuals.

New York "headquarters" was not the only location affected by the Saturday Evening Post article. In the years 1937 to 1940, Chicago had formed a small nucleus of AA's, beginning with Earl T. and his wife Katie, later joined by several others. One of them, Sylvia, donated funding to set up an AA office, and provided the services of her nonalcoholic personal secretary, Grace Cultice, to respond to the large number of inquiries in the Chicago area.

**“ As AA in Chicago slowly grew and prospered, Grace was continually at the business end of Sylvia's phone, and she became the group's first secretary. When the Saturday Evening Post article appeared in 1941, the traffic became very heavy. Sylvia's place became a sort of Chicago Grand Central and things were just about as rugged with Earl and Katie. So they rented a one-room office in the Loop, and secretary Grace was installed there to direct the stream of applicants for Twelfth Step attention, hospitalization or other help.” (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, p. 23)**

Although Cleveland already had a Central Committee by 1940, Chicago's one-room office is often referred to as the first Intergroup / Central Office or organized

service center.

Back in New York, a local service center began to be operated informally out of an AA clubhouse that had been established in 1940, on Manhattan's West 24th Street. While AA's "headquarters" in Newark responded to inquiries on a national level, this local service center responded to local inquiries.

**“ In New York City, the AA Clubhouse on 334 1/2 West 24th Street was established in 1940. This was the hub of AA activity on the local level. In 1942, the first New York City Central Committee was formed to handle inquiries from new prospects. They hired two (2) secretaries who were responsible for answering letters and phone calls.**

The New Jersey meetings were also using the Clubhouse on West 24th Street as their headquarters. Meetings in New Jersey, started by Hank P. began in 1936. Even though these weren't officially, AA meetings, AA grew in New Jersey until it was necessary to form their own Central Committee in 1944. (Mitchell K., Growth of Central Offices, <http://alcoholism.about.com/library/blmitch19.htm>)

The New York Central Committee was eventually replaced, as membership grew, with what is now known as the New York Inter-Group. This Inter-Group was formed in 1946 by 23 founding groups from Brooklyn, Manhattan, Nassau County, Queens, Staten Island, Suffolk County, The Bronx and Westchester County. After the New Jersey Central Committee was formed, Hank P., who had argued vehemently against using the word "God" in the 12 Steps (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, pp. 166-67), served as the first full-time paid secretary of that office from 1944-49.

In Columbus, Ohio a service center was started in 1943, today called the Fellowship Intergroup. Los Angeles opened a service center a year later, in 1944. Colorado and Maryland opened service centers by 1946, followed by Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Wisconsin and—Canada's first—Alberta. At least 16 service centers existed by the time the first General Service Conference was held in April 1951. An Intergroup office in Akron, the birthplace of AA, was opened in April 1954.

Over time, many service centers incorporated as not-for-profits, similar to the New York Inter-Group. The naming conventions for these service centers changed over time too. Names like Central Committee or AA Association were replaced by the naming convention of Intergroup or Central Office. The term "intergoup" was first used in 1953 in Charleston, West Virginia. The term evolved from the association between AA and the first treatment center in the state, called the Alcan Center, Inc., which was founded in 1944. The terms Intergroup and Central Office are interchangeable.

Currently, there are 757 Intergroup / Central Offices registered with AA's General Service Office; 514 are located in the United States and Canada.

Just as each AA group functioned autonomously from other AA groups, each service center functioned autonomously from any other service center:

**“Throughout the 1940s, AA Central Offices sprung up around the country as AA membership and the number of Groups grew. Each one had their own set of rules and regulations affecting local groups. Some areas even had rival Central Committees due to one faction not agreeing with the other one’s rules. The long heard Rule 62 story probably came about as a result of all of these rules and regulations. If all the rules were put into effect by AA, no alcoholic would qualify for membership in Alcoholics Anonymous. (Mitchell K., Growth of Central Offices, <http://alcoholism.about.com/library/blmitch19.htm>)**

And indeed it was a service center manager that developed Rule 62. In those early days, one sober AA member decided to create a rule-driven service center.

**“As he saw it, the right setup would require a very big building and would take an awful lot of money. On one floor there would be a club. On the next floor there would be a meeting room. On the next, a clinic and rehabilitation center. Upstairs, there surely would have to be a loan agency where the indigent alcoholic could borrow a little spare cash. Such was his vision of the new center! He was some promoter, this one, and he actually sold the townspeople on his idea. He, naturally, was to become the general manager. His blueprint involved three separate corporations, one for the club, one for the clinic, and one for the loan department. Altogether, he wrote sixty-one rules, regulations and by-laws to make these corporations do their good work. (Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 104)**

After a long interval, this man wrote to AA headquarters in New York, admitting the failure of his service center, and along with his letter sent a card, which he had already mailed to every AA group in the United States.

**“It was folded like a golf score card, and on the outside was printed “Group so-and-so, place so-and-so. Rule No. 62.” When the card was unfolded a single pungent sentence met the eye: “Don’t take yourself too damned seriously. (Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p 104)**

In contrast, most service centers were not nearly so ambitious. In a second Saturday Evening Post article about AA, “The Drunkard’s Best Friend”, published April 1950, just shy of AA’s 15th anniversary, Jack Alexander describes how AA typically communicated with non-members and

offered its services:

**“In most cities of any size the fraternity has a telephone listed in its own name. A nickel call will bring a volunteer worker who won’t talk down to a drunk, as the average nonalcoholic has a way of doing but will talk convincingly in the jargon of the drunk. The worker won’t do any urging; he will describe the Alcoholics Anonymous program in abbreviated form and depart. The drunk is invited to telephone again if he is serious about wanting to become sober. Or a drunk, on his own initiative or in tow of a relative, may drop in at the AA office, where he will receive the same nonevangelistic treatment. In the larger cities the offices do a rushing trade, especially after weekends or legal holidays. Many small-town and village groups maintain clubrooms over the bank or feed store; in one Canadian town the AA’s share quarters with a handbook operator, using it by night after the bookie has gone home. Some of these groups carry a standing classified advertisement in the daily or weekly newspaper. If they don’t, a small amount of inquiry will disclose the meeting place of the nearest group; a local doctor, or clergyman, or policeman will know.**

While many of these offices maintained an “open door” to anyone seeking sobriety, others did not:

**“In those days AA wasn’t easy to find—and we kept it that way,” one old-timer, sober since 1940, remembers. “A carefully selected group of priests, judges and policemen knew about AA; our phone number wasn’t listed and could be gotten only from information. That way we knew that any newcomer who found us had generally made enough of an effort to guarantee the sincerity of his desire for sobriety.” In 1946 the Twelve Traditions were published, and the Third Tradition—“The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking”—raised the level of tolerance by rendering subjective judgment superfluous when it came to who was sincere and who wasn’t. (Box 459, News and Notes from the General Service Office of AA, A Lot of History Enlightens Work of Intergroup / Central Offices Today, February-March 2002, Vol. 48, No. 1)**

At first the service centers were run solely by AA volunteers. However, in the 1940’s many of the service centers, especially in large metropolitan areas, became so busy that full-time employees became needed as well. The question then became, are these employees being paid for doing Twelfth Step work? This question was eventually answered by the adoption of the Eighth Tradition in 1950, which states: “AA should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.”

The formulation of the Eighth Tradition began in October 1942 when Clarence S formed an investigating committee in Cleveland after hearing that Bill and Dr

Bob were receiving royalties from Big Book sales and a weekly monetary stipend from the Rockefeller Foundation. Bill and Dr. Bob were asked to come to Cleveland to discuss the issue with the committee. Upon examining the certified audit of AA’s financial records, the committee verified that both Bill and Dr. Bob were receiving \$30 a week from Rockefeller, and that they had been assigned royalties from Big Book sales. Bill was receiving \$25 a week in Big Book royalties, whereas Dr. Bob’s royalties were temporarily being used to pay for AA office work. (Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, pp. 193-94)

The controversy stemmed from Clarence and the committee’s resistance to the idea that Bill and Dr. Bob should be paid for their AA work, since an informal tradition had already been established on professionalism and paid workers. The informal tradition was that AA was to be non-professional, and no one in AA should take money for their 12th step service work. There was however another side to the issue:

**“But would this constitute professionalism, within our growing Tradition? Some members said this would [italics in original] make us professionals; we would be making money out of A.A. But our experience elsewhere had begun to indicate that this was not necessarily so. Our clubs were paying for caretakers, most of them A. A. members. They were not paid anything for their Twelfth Step work, but they were compensated as janitors and cooks. We simply had to have their full-time services. Our New York Office had just engaged an alcoholic staff member, full time. Was she a “professional AA”? Obviously not. She was being paid for special services, as a secretary. (Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, pp. 194-95)**

In this way the principle of special services, separate from non-professional 12th step work, was established. The principle allowed Bill and Dr. Bob to receive royalties from Big Book sales, because writing the Big Book was designated as a special service and not 12th Step work. It allowed caretakers and secretaries who worked at service centers to receive a weekly paycheck because they were not actually performing 12th Step work but were doing what any professional in their occupation would do. In the decades following the adoption of the Eighth Tradition, a number of books and pamphlets were approved by the AA General Service Conference, and published by AA World Service, Inc., whose purpose was to help AA members to understand the concept of non-professional versus professional work done in AA. For example, one pamphlet published in 1971 states:

**“But new questions arose as the membership grew, and the word of hope spread, sending thousands of alcoholics in search of AA.**

*The first intergroups or central offices were usually manned by AA volunteers: now, most such offices are so busy that full-time employees are needed as well. Naturally, AAs are better suited to such jobs than are nonmembers – but are these AAs then being paid for doing Twelfth Step work? No. In the office, they are just paving the way for this work to be done. Arranging to get the sick drunk into a hospital, telling a shaky newcomer where the nearest meeting is tonight, they are helping to make it possible for that alcoholic to hear the message “person to person and face to face.” (The Twelve Traditions Illustrated, AA World Service Inc.)*

In addition to addressing the issue of “professionalism”, the Eighth Tradition also addresses the issue of “organization” by acknowledging the existence of service centers. The Ninth Tradition expands more fully on the service center concept, stating: “AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.” In an editorial “On the Ninth Tradition” published in the August 1948 Grapevine, Bill W. writes:

**“AA has always violently resisted the idea of any general organization. Yet, paradoxically, we have ever stoutly insisted upon organizing certain special services; [italics in original] mostly those absolutely necessary to effective and plentiful 12th Step work. If, for instance, an AA group elects a secretary or rotating committee, if an area forms an intergroup committee, if we set up a Foundation, a General Office or a Grapevine, then we are organized for service. The AA book and pamphlets, or meeting places and clubs, our dinners and regional assemblies –these are services too. Nor can we secure good hospital connections, properly sponsor new prospects and obtain good public relations just by chance. People have to be appointed to look after these things, sometimes paid people. Special services are performed.**

The resistance to “any general organization” was based on several factors. One of these was knowledge of previous movements similar to AA which had failed, such as the Washingtonians. It was perceived that one factor in the failure of these movements was how they had organized. It was felt that by avoiding such organization, AA would avoid at least one of the pitfalls that had hampered these previous movements. But even more compelling than the historical facts surrounding the failed attempts of earlier sobriety movements was the hands-on experience of the early fellowship with its own membership. Based on that experience, AA decided to completely go against the traditional type of organizational structure so prevalent in the world we live in. This is described on pages 172-73 of AA’s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions:

**“Well, let’s see. Did anyone ever hear of a nation, a church, a political party, even a benevolent association that had no membership rules? Did anyone ever hear of a society which couldn’t somehow discipline its members and enforce obedience to necessary rules and regulations? Doesn’t nearly every society on earth give authority to some of its members to impose obedience upon the rest and to punish or expel offenders? Therefore, every nation, in fact every form of society, has to be a government administered by human beings. Power to direct or govern is the essence of organization everywhere.**

Yet Alcoholics Anonymous is an exception. It does not conform to this pattern. Neither its General Service Conference, its Foundation Board \* nor the humblest group committee can issue a single directive to an AA member and make it stick, let alone mete out any punishment. We’ve tried it lots of times, but utter failure is always the result. Groups have tried to expel members, but the banished have come back to sit in the meeting place, saying, “This is life for us; you can’t keep us out.” Committees have instructed many an AA to stop working on a chronic backslider, only to be told: “How I do my Twelfth Step work is my business. Who are you to judge?” This doesn’t mean an AA won’t take advice or suggestions from more experienced members, but he surely won’t take orders. Who is more unpopular than the oldtime AA, full of wisdom, who moves to another area and tries to tell the group there how to run its business? He and all like him who “view with alarm for the good of AA” meet the most stubborn resistance or, worse still, laughter.

Clearly, AA’s organizational structure, whether consisting of a service center, intergroup, central office, board or committee, is not meant to govern. But AA does need some organizational structure, and the reason for that is succinctly summed up on page 175 of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions:

**“Just as the aim of each AA member is personal sobriety, the aim of our services is to bring sobriety within reach of all who want it. If nobody does the group’s chores, if the area’s telephone rings unanswered, if we do not reply to our mail, then AA as we know it would stop. Our communications lines with those who need our help would be broken.**

In early AA, the fundamental role of a service center was to be there when the phone rang, to help the still suffering alcoholic find a meeting or connect them to a sober alcoholic willing to do 12th step work. It’s the bedrock. Of course, from the beginning, some service centers, for instance in Cleveland, included other special services, such as cooperation with hospitals, treatment centers or detox facilities. As time went on, some service centers in larger urban areas added even

more special services. For instance, some developed committees to communicate with corrections facilities. Many developed committees to communicate with local media groups, government, educational, religious and other organizations. Many developed social committees to organize holiday alkathons, round-ups, picnics and other special events. Most began publishing their own newsletter:

**“AA’s first newsletter was the Cleveland Central Bulletin. Its publication began in October, 1942. It was an outgrowth of the mimeographed “Bulletin to all Groups” as a way of sending information not only to the Cleveland, Ohio Groups, but to the Cleveland AA members serving in the armed services. The New York headquarters liked the Central Bulletin so much that they began publishing their own “meeting in print” in 1944 – The Grapevine.” (Mitchell K., Growth of Central Offices, <http://alcoholism.about.com/library/blmitch19.htm>)**

Later, the Intergroup / Central Offices also took on the task of selling AA Conference-approved literature. These offices proved to be an effective means of distributing materials published by AA World Services, Inc., and their role in distribution was considered essential to the growth of AA publishing.

**“This last (the dissemination of AA Conference-approved literature) is a particularly vital aspect of intergroup work, and all the offices are constantly looking for more efficient ways to deal with the vast amounts of material they handle. Dennis Manders, who served as AA’s nonalcoholic business administrator/controller from 1950-85, says that “the enormous growth in volume of AA publishing in the 1970s alone would not have been possible were it not for the work of the intergroups and central offices.” G.S.O., he explains, “had only to establish a network of warehouses from which to supply the local offices with literature in a timely fashion. It was this close partnership that led to the Intergroup Seminars as we know them today.” (Box 459, News and Notes from the General Service Office of AA, A Lot of History Enlightens Work of Intergroup / Central Offices Today, February-March 2002, Vol. 48, No. 1)**

Even today, many Intergroup / Central Offices rely on the revenue from the sale of publications from AA World Services (Conference-approved literature) and sale of publications from the AA Grapevine. Because of the Seventh Tradition, which restricts AA from accepting outside contributions, the only other sources of revenue for Intergroup / Central Offices are voluntary contributions by AA groups or AA members’ personal contributions or revenue from AA sponsored events.

As the AA fellowship grew larger in the

1950s and thereafter, AA groups in most major metropolitan areas banded together to establish local Intergroup / Central Offices to service the participating groups. With the growth of the internet in recent years, most local Intergroup / Central Offices added a website as part of their services. Besides providing an online meeting directory and listing its other services to alcoholic, such as a 24 hour help line, the sites often have information about the Intergroup / Central Office itself. For example, the site will often note if it has been incorporated as a non-profit organization, give the history of its formation, list its various committees and describe its organizational structure.

The organizational structure – such as how board members are selected and how local AA groups are represented – can vary widely, depending on many factors. For instance, if it is incorporated as a not-for-profit, it may have developed by-laws to conform to operating guidelines required by the state under its incorporation. Factors such as the number of groups it services – group participation is always voluntary, rather than mandatory – can also affect its structure. Typically each participating group has an intergroup representative.

Each Intergroup / Central Office functions independently from each other and is free to define and provide services that are suited to their community. The GSO, in The AA Service Manual, provides a list of the typical services provided by Intergroup / Central Offices:

- Receiving, arranging and following up Twelfth Step calls.
- Answer inquiries about AA
- Establishing local public information committees.
- Maintaining information about local hospitals and recovery facilities for alcoholics.
- Publishing local AA meeting lists.
- Providing a newsletter.
- Ordering, selling and distributing AA Conference-approved literature.  
*(The AA Service Manual, 2011–2012 Edition, p. S42)*

Most Intergroup / Central Offices service a specific geographic area. In a fundamental sense, service centers are intended to be a partnership among groups in a community – just as AA groups themselves are partnerships of individuals. However, communities do not have to be tied to a specific geographic location. Communities can be groups of people who share the same ideas and vision. And service centers can be created to service these communities, spanning geographical boundaries. An example of this is the Native American Indian General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous (NAIGSO), which “functions to provide a vision of recovery, unity and service to the more than 500 sovereign Indian Nations in North America.”

Reprinted from AA Toronto Agnostics Website

More information on NAIGSO is on their website. <http://www.naigso-aa.org/>

Another example of a service center that services a community of people, rather than a geographical location, is the Online Intergroup, a non-profit corporation, which “is a service entity established pursuant to Tradition Nine of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) to operate on behalf of the participating online AA groups in accordance with AA’s Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts.”

## COMMITTED TO THE AA TRADITIONS

Carl Sandberg said: “Whenever a society or civilization perishes there is always one condition present; they forgot where they came from.” We must not forget our Traditions and how they were forged from the hard lessons of experience. We must not forget them because without them, AA would have perished long ago. If we don’t live by them today, AA will wither and die.

The future of AA depends on our commitment to the Traditions.

We show our commitment to Tradition Three when anyone with a desire to stop drinking – even agnostics, atheists and freethinkers – is accepted into AA. As Marya Hornbacher put it in her book Waiting: An Unbeliever’s Higher Power:

*“I’ve become aware that 12-step programs are home to people from every religion, denomination, sect, cult, political tilt, gender identity, sexual preference, economic strata, racial and ethnic background, believers in gun rights and abortion rights and the right to home schooling, drinkers of coffee and tea, whiskey and mouthwash, people who sleep on their sides or their stomachs or sidewalks.*

The openness of AA to all is not a new phenomenon, recently discovered, but is deeply entrenched in our history. As noted in this brief history, Jim B., an atheist, brought AA to Philadelphia in 1939 and Ray W., an atheist, brought AA to San Francisco in 1940. These early members were insistent, especially Jim B., in maintaining that members could choose their own belief or non-belief. Keep in mind that while the short form of the Third Tradition is frequently used for brevity, the long form states:

*“Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group (italics added), provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.*

The last part of Tradition Three is especially important to those who form new groups in AA. It tells us that members of AA do not have to conform to anyone else’s

belief or non-belief. It ensures that any group of people – even agnostics, atheists and freethinkers – can decide to meet regularly for the purpose of sobriety and call itself an AA group, and the group will automatically accepted as an AA group.

And it ensures that AA groups are independent from outside affiliations. One reason for this was that in the 1930s, when AA started, it had a tight affiliation with a religious organization, the Oxford Group. Based on their experience with the Oxford Group, the early members recognized that AA should be free from the influence of religious organizations especially since religious organizations inherently enforce rules, regulations, conformity and dogma. The early AAs would have none of it!

We show our commitment to Tradition Four when groups are free to choose the content of their own meetings, following their group conscience. It’s a cliché in AA that “all you need is a resentment and a coffee pot” to form an AA group. In the history of AA there are countless AA groups that formed because someone decided that something was not to their liking in their current AA group, and they decided to form a new group of their own with other likeminded individuals. In some cases, the objection was to the religious content of the meetings. The first example of this was in 1939, when the Cleveland group split from the Akron group. Clarence S. recollects that on the way back to Cleveland from Akron, the Cleveland members who were Catholic would discuss why they were uncomfortable with the religious content of the Akron meetings:

*“The testimony given by members at the meetings seemed like open confession to them, and this was something they were not allowed to practice. Furthermore, the idea of receiving guidance didn’t sit well. And to top it off, they [Oxford Groupers] were using the wrong Bible. As a result, I received a lot of flak on the way home. (Dr. Bob and the Good Old-Timers, Chapter 12)*

Oscar W., an early member, writes that after Akron finally split from the Oxford Group, there was still resistance to the imposition of religious content, but this time from New York AA, rather than the Oxford Group:

*“Most of us in Akron didn’t like all this praying,” said Oscar. “We had enough of it in the Oxford Group. I still don’t like praying in AA. I don’t like the Serenity Prayer. New York brought it in, and we resented it. We thought they were bringing back the Oxford Group.” (Dr. Bob and the Good Old-Timers, Chap. 22)*

In his April 1950 Saturday Evening Post article about AA, The Drunkard’s Best Friend, the respected journalist Jack Alexander writes about the tendency of AA groups to disagree about “who is going to run

the thing" and then split into new groups:

**"The usual intra-fellowship quarrel over who is going to run the thing inevitably develops and there are factional splits, but the splits help to spread the movement, too, and all the big quarrels soon become little ones, and then disappear.**

Thus, our differences help to spread the movement. AA's First Tradition is about unity. It does not mean that we should attempt to squash differences amongst our members or our groups.

Our founders and early members meant for us to form a fellowship, based on unity of purpose. Fellowships are not the same as organizations. Organizations have rules, regulations, conformity and dogma. Whereas the AA fellowship "ought never be organized" as stated in Tradition Nine. Fellowships simply share a unity of purpose, and that is often what the early members meant when they said "Keep it Simple." They meant for AA's unity to mean a simple singleness of purpose: the desire to stop drinking.

Before the Traditions were published in 1946, early groups did, unfortunately, attempt to practice exclusion. Oscar W., an early member of the Akron / Cleveland groups who traveled across the U.S. in the early 1940s to spread AA, was surprised with what he found when he traveled back to certain locations:

**"I came back to visit one group I helped start in my travels," said Oscar W., "and there were four ministers sitting in the front row." I said, "Isn't this wonderful? We have four ministers in AA." One of them stood up and said, "We're not drunken ministers. We are the screening committee for Alcoholics Anonymous, to determine who is fit for membership." (Dr. Bob and the Good Old-Timers Chapter 20)**

Through these experiences, early members realized that written traditions would be required to guide the fellowship away from a "screening committee" or other such governance structures. These written traditions were based on a few simple principles, such as service, rather than rules and regulations. Hence the Ninth Tradition states: "AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."

Service boards and committees are formed at various levels within AA and rightly so, because even though AA is anti-organizational, we recognize that we need some minimum level to provide service. The General Service Office (GSO), for example, provides the service of listing AA groups. The GSO does not screen or exclude groups from the list during the application process. It does suggest, in line with Tradition Six, that the new group avoid selecting a name affiliated with an organization, such as a correctional facility or treatment center or a church, and especially take care not to use an institution's name. (The AA Group – Where it all Begins, p. 21)

The GSO itself follows the Third Tradition: "Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation." Thus, the GSO accepts registrations from groups that call themselves "We Agnostics" or "Beyond Belief," and counts them as AA groups, just like any other.

And, just as everything else is non-rules driven in AA, an AA group is under no obligation to register with the GSO. Nor is a local Intergroup / Central Office regulated by the GSO or, for that matter, any other body, because AA is anti-organizational, and operates on the principles set forth in the

Traditions.

Ironically, a local Intergroup / Central Office is even free to act in contradiction to the Traditions and define its own rules and regulations. That is the nature of AA's anti-organizational fellowship.

Bob Pearson, General Manager of the GSO from 1974 to 1984, tells us, however, that the Traditions are our strength:

**"If we stick close to our Traditions, Concepts, and Warranties, and if we keep an open mind and open heart, we can deal with these and any other problems that we have or ever will have. If we ever falter and fail, it will be simply because of us. It will be because we can't control our own egos or get along well enough with each other. It will be because we have too much fear and rigidity and not enough trust and common sense.**

Bob is right about the Traditions. The Traditions have served AA well.

The history of AA demonstrates that all attempts to circumvent the Traditions by creating rules, regulations, restrictions, conformity and dogma have uniformly failed. Current and future attempts will also fail. We are here to serve each other in the serious business of staying sober. We cannot do this by attempting to govern or judge each other. Imagine, one alcoholic judging another! Our founders and early members learned this and have passed this knowledge along to us through the Traditions.

When we show commitment to the Traditions and are organized for service, rather than governance or judgment, we succeed and fulfill the vision of AA.

Linda R. Posted on the AA Toronto Agnostics website on March 11, 2012.

Reprinted from AA Toronto Agnostics Website

Posted March 11, 2012

## Why Support Central Office Red Deer?

There are nearly 700 central/intergroup offices throughout the world performing vital A.A. services. These constitute a network of service outlets and A.A. contacts to help carry the A.A. message.

### Central Office fulfills:

- puts you in direct contact with Alcoholics Anonymous in just about any area
- answers inquiries from those seeking help.
- refers you to a nearby group, where sponsorship may be arranged, or have a twelfth stepper contact them.
- maintains a conveniently located office where our volunteers coordinate local A.A. services.
- publishes and distributes up-to-date lists of meetings and other information about local A.A. services.
- sells A.A. Conference-approved literature and other spiritual/recovery related materials.
- circulates and exchanges information among all the A.A. groups in the community.

- provides "exchange" meetings, where group program chairpersons meet regularly to exchange meetings with other groups.
- is an ideal contact with those in the community seeking information about A.A.
- maintains contact with local groups in correctional facilities and treatment facilities, offering literature and prerelease A.A. contacts and arranging for A.A. speakers and visitors to meetings.
- publishes a periodic distribution to A.A. groups in the form of a monthly newsletter.
- Your support goes to the newcomer and AAWS which is our main supplier and resource.

# RED DEER CENTRAL OFFICE **A.A. WORD SEARCH**

*First person to bring in the completed puzzle will receive a free A.A. book*

## Recovery

O D O H F X V R G O L Z M F X X G M X T W Z U O K U O M C B  
I T I X A N Q Y B S Q M Y A G C R T X K O E O R E H A B P P  
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I N O K E V R M H U Q P E I O U C M U O D A T P X R N X N I  
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G B P O Q P W X A E L Q R K T C B A B S D N A N I H A N R S  
N P L P Y E S F A B R R E H E A L T H Y E D N H P E R S E T  
I J Q E U H D E M L A P T T M S X R X O N N C X O R E O C A  
T Q U V V K L K E U U S A H P E N J Y O C O E T C A H R O N  
E L V E T I H T E D L B R E T M H U W G E I R R B P T Y V C  
E B Y C G Y B B T L T X B R A A Q D R F G T M E L Y M L E E  
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A I C Y X C F K N Q W Q L P I A L S N U E E L T D M U Q Y B  
N W E R T T S H G Q R F E Y O G M H F E S V S M D Y G F E U  
A S J K N G K T S Z K U C Y N E W R W S Z E G E E R U V B S  
B W Y K N K U H X L J L K W S R H X R I F R N N P E I J T E  
P O A I Z L T W E U X X B C J J W E U C L P I T R V L C I W  
C D P S U P P O R T S Y S T E M G D P R A E H T E O T Z Q W  
F O L N E C B F M D N V P B U G L A D E D S T E S C X O G H  
C R Y J E K U P Y G X L J F I B U Z Q X D P A A S E V K D X  
Q L T D R Y G I C K O S O R Q M R Z D E I A E M I R Z H P S  
C A N X I E T Y O K T Q T O D Q C S Q O C L R F O O D J U V  
W Z U P W A C S B O E V D U X O A F Q A T E B V N S K L B Q  
X P H H F A E H X L D J F M C V C R K P I R E Q W Z N M X L  
P R E S S U R E D Q M P P Y O Z K T M M O V A F W G C D C L  
E S O I U O G L N G O E S H Q D B K O K N T R E A T M E N T  
E H V P L H K E Y L V I D Q R E E X T R N N R M Z E Q E T M

detox	copingskills	relapseprevention	supportsystem	casemanager
recovery	substanceabuse	aameetings	grouptherapy	doctor
triggers	breathing	nameetings	treatment	nurse
group	exercise	celebraterecovery	treatmentteam	rehab
therapy	relapse	sponsor	therapist	IOP
temptations	anxiety	depression	healthy	dependence
enabler	tolerance	addiction	anger	blackout
coping	pressure	disease	guilt	recovery

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_  
or phone number \_\_\_\_\_

CHAPTER THREE

MAY 2007



"Okay! I just finished my ninety meetings in ninety days!  
When will you people tell me how this thing works?"

**TWISTED**

*The lighter side of being new to AA*

**WHEN SOMEONE SAYS**



**FRIEND OF BILL W.**

*submitted by NM*



**"I had a layover in Omaha ... which  
led to a hangover in Des Moines."**

Red Deer AA

# Serenity Photo Contest



Congrats  
to "S"



Congrats  
to "C"

## Rules For Photo Contest

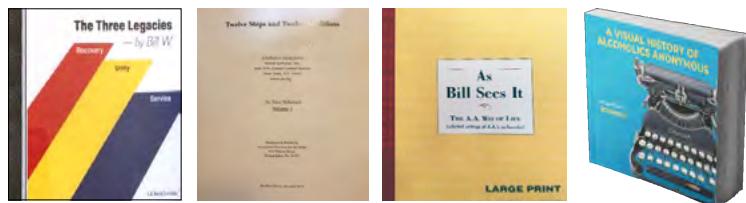
- Photo submission must be by an AA Member • **Deadline:** December 1st, 2021 •
- Photo must be taken by you with your camera/device within two weeks of submission •
  - Doesn't have to be a local photo and snowy photos are welcome •
  - Winner receives 50% Off anything at Central Office (Red Deer location only) •

# Central Office Red Deer

Old Court House downtown Red Deer



\*New Items at Central Office, on CD,  
Braille Large Print and A Visual History AA



## FEATURED AA PAMPHLETS

- A Newcomer Asks
- Is AA for Me?
- Is AA for You?
- Do you think you are different
- Where do I go from here?
- A.A. for the Older Alcoholic  
—Never Too Late
- Frequently Asked Questions About AA
- AA At a Glance
- A Brief Guide to AA
- Inside AA – Understanding the Fellowship and its Services
- AA as a Resource for the Health Care Professional
- AA Fact File
- Accessibility for All Alcoholics
- The Jack Alexander Article About AA
- The "God" Word—Agnostic and Atheist Members in AA
- AA for Alcoholics with Mental Health Issues—and their sponsors
- The Twelve Steps Illustrated

Please call to book a time to visit us:

**587-377-1117**

We are open Fridays 10 am – Noon

*Central Office is a Service for  
A.A. members and potential members  
that began in Red Deer  
in September 2019 through  
A.A. World Services and  
several A.A. groups.*

If you need to meet privately with your sponsor/sponsee you may book Central Office.

Please see our virtual  
**NEWCOMERS welcome package**  
on Our website: [reddeeraa.org](http://reddeeraa.org)  
Please look under: > AA Resources and/or Literature



Printable 3-Fold Meeting List for  
Red Deer Meetings ➤ [Download](#)

\* New online only list available at Central office \*  
**Information on Sponsorship**

[https://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/p-15\\_Q&AonSpon.pdf](https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/p-15_Q&AonSpon.pdf)

## Online Stats

- **24,800 impressions** (how often reddeeraa.org showed up in someone's google search)

- **1,490 - unique clicks** to site

- Most searched term: *AA meetings Red Deer*
- 2nd most: *AA red deer*
- Most visited page : *meetings*
- 2nd most: *home page*

- Most used device: *Mobile Phones*



## Phone Stats

Approximately **70%** calls are for AA meetings/online and included

**20%** 12 step calls

**10%** Al-Anon or other inquiries.



Phone calls went up in August and September, the most texts came in March and April 2021.

**Average monthly usage: 140 Texts (average 6 month period)**

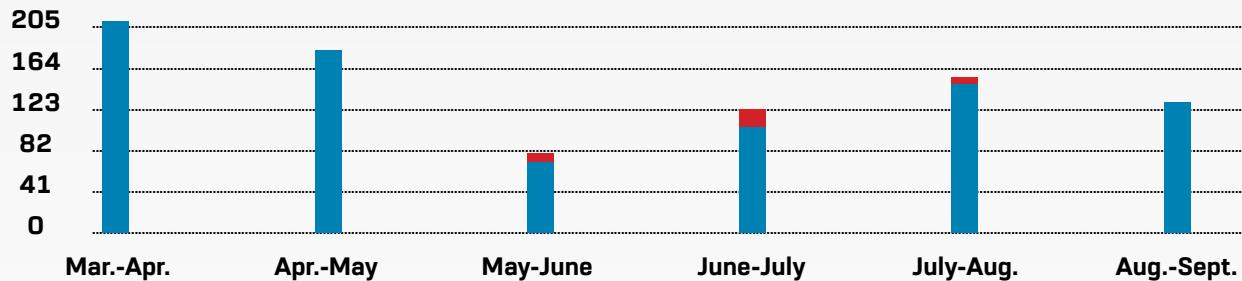


6 months trend

Texts

- Included in your plan
- Pay per use / overage  
(some pay per use items may be included in your plan)

Average monthly usage: **140 Texts**



**Average monthly usage: 129 minutes voice calls (average of a 6 month period)**

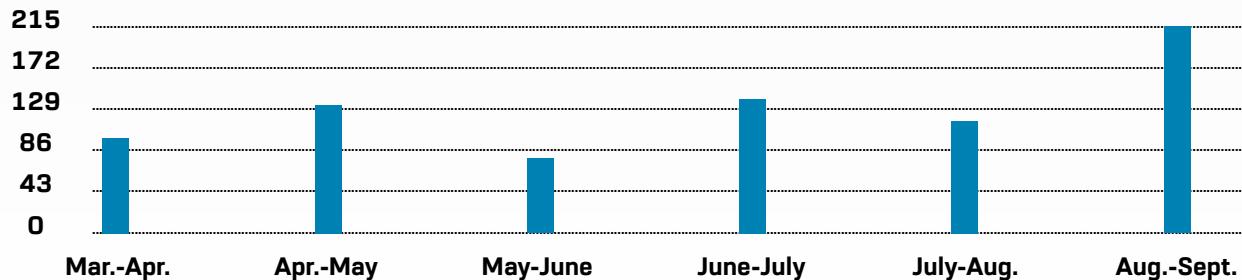


6 months trend

Min.

- Included in your plan
- Pay per use / overage  
(some pay per use items may be included in your plan)

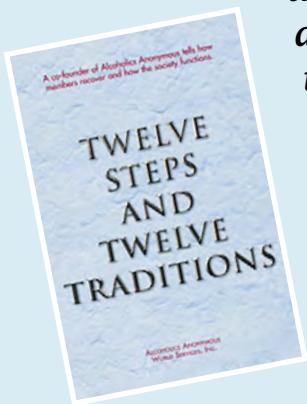
Average monthly usage: **129 min.**



# FEATURED ARTICLE WRITTEN BY ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS MEMBERS

## Step 5

*"This feeling of being at one with God and man, this emerging from isolation through the open and honest sharing of our terrible burden of guilt, brings us to a resting place where we may prepare ourselves for the following Steps toward a full and meaningful sobriety."*



**READ** Step 5 online:  
[www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/en\\_step5.pdf](http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/en_step5.pdf)

**LISTEN** online:  
[www.aa.org/pages/en\\_US/twelve-steps-and-twelve-traditions-audio-version#audio-player](http://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/twelve-steps-and-twelve-traditions-audio-version#audio-player)

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- Twelve Steps - Step Five (pp.55-62)



## Step 5

We admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs

# Just For Today

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCES ON STEP 5

Step 5 is a powerful and healing process which provided me with the opportunity to share my Step 4 with a trusted person. Looking back, Step 4 had me search for the unhappiness I caused others and myself and discover my emotional shortcomings. After carrying the load of hurt and resentment and living the way I had for so many years, I had to put all my trust in God; Creator of all and share my problems with another human being. I am forever grateful for my sponsors and spiritual advisors who listened to my factual list of wrongs without judgment. I finally rid myself of so much hurt and turmoil which I had carried around in my heart long before I became powerless over alcohol. I no longer felt alone and Step 5 has carried my through many adversities, all I had to do was be honest and forthcoming.

Working the Steps is making a choice to live in my will of conflict or in God's will of harmony. I chose the latter and I have never once regretted my choice!

AA Member, 20 years sober

I'm so grateful that these steps are in order if i didn't have that connection with my higher power before setting out to do my 4 and 5 I'm not sure i would be here sober today. When it became time to do my step 5 I was not full of fear, I came into this program willing to go to any lengths to change . I had sat in the rooms and listened to my fellow A.A members tell stories of the things they had done in their past and knew I was not alone. Once I had sat and wrote down my 4 I was fully ready to share where I had been wrong , my resentments, fears and the ways I had harmed others with my sponsor. My sponsor had shared her inventory with me making me feel safe, and she sat and listened to mine with no judgement. I cried while I got every fear and resentment out and than when I was done I truly felt his weight come off my shoulders, I felt different. After i went home and sat in a hour of relection as my sponsor suggested I was ready to have god remove all my defects of

character know I was not stuck being the person I was , I did not have to continue with these self serving behaviors. I had a opportunity to change and recover.

AA member, 3 years sober

**S**tep 5 Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. I think the steps are put in order for reason some are harder for a reason if we cant look at ourselves admit we wrong how can we admit to others. I think this step has really taught me how to keep my ego in check be a honest person if I didn't come to AA I probably would of kept these things to grave with me. This is a step you can not skip, or you won't stay sober and clean. But you must do this step with a person you really can trust because it can go wrong just being honest will set us free being honest with our higher power. This helps us have meaningful sobriety and life.

A grateful member of AA, 2 and half years

**S**tep 5 was initially a little daunting for me and at the beginning I wasn't truly sure if I understood how to go about it. With the help of my sponsor I was able to understand how to practically tackle this step and how to put pen to paper. Although it was uncomfortable to admit my faults and character defects, I was determined to address them. This was largely due to Big Book writings and from what I had heard from others in the rooms that this step needed

to be done thoroughly in order to maintain long term sobriety and peace of mind.

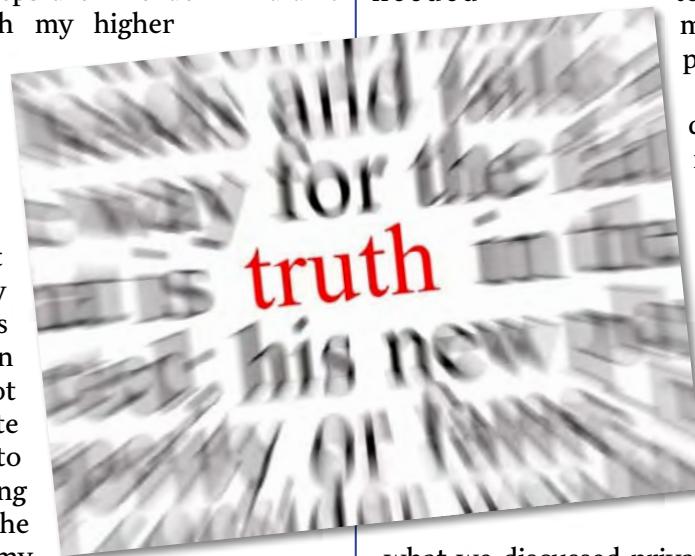
Honestly it wasn't so difficult admitting wrongs and resentments to myself and to God but to another human being was humbling. I'm not even sure I would have been completely thorough had I not had to speak to them out aloud with my sponsor.

My sponsor was not shocked or appalled with any of my actions and did not judge me based on them either. I knew

I was able to trust her keeping what we discussed private which was a relief. About 4-5 months after I felt I was as able to truly let go of the past with burning of the pages I had written on for step 5.

I am always very grateful for the steps laid out by those who came before us in order for us to live happy, joyous and free - step 5 has been a great freeing step in my life in this sobriety journey.

Grateful AA member, 11 months sober



# Just For Today

**S**tep 5 gave me the chance to thoroughly and honestly take a look at myself as a sober individual. After writing out my step 4, my sponsor went over it with me and helped me realize my character defects, the selfishness, and my part in the resentments I had. It's very important to have a solid step 1,2,3 before doing your step 4,5. A minister or sponsor with experience doing step 5's is important as well. Writing and sharing our deepest shame and anger helps to bring it to the surface for forgiveness to begin! Some do a 4,5 every year or two. The feeling of sharing ourselves with another can be fearful at first but afterwards, a sliver of humility begins as well as your journey through sobriety.

AA member, 13 years sober

I had been "fixing" my own defective thinking my entire life. Step 5 was a process of cleaning house, exposing my dark secrets to God and another human being and listening to myself say all of my grudges and fears aloud for the first time ever. How cathartic step 5 was! To be told I was forgiven, and to forgive others for the role I had played in creating those resentments was freeing. I held back nothing, we invited God into the room and I became ok with me again. The blockages to my Higher Power crumbled and a new connection to a spiritual power I desperately needed was developed. Tolerance and love for every human being followed. Nobody had the power to hurt me anymore. I changed the way I experienced their behaviors and saw them as either hurting, sick or not intending to cause any hurt. Today I go to God and my sponsor with my distress, and I know that God's got this too.

AA member, 3 years sober

**S**tep 5 for me was all about starting to let go of the regret and resentment I had built up over the years. For this alcoholic it was a very important part of my recovery because I often drank to deal with these things when they came up. The act of talking with someone about my wrongs and my part in them was an amazingly freeing experience. I came away from Step 5 feeling exhausted and I hadn't realized how much emotional weight I had been carrying around until I put some of it down. It was wonderful.

AA Member, 10 years sober

## Step 5

*"Admittecd to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs"*



**A**lcoholic Anonymous step five is often called "Confession." In this step we "admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrong." This step follows a written inventory of our wrongs and it is critical to share this as soon as possible. When it came time for me to do my step 5 I was very nervous. The idea of sharing all my wrongs to another person was scary. However I knew the importance of getting it all out and letting it go so I decided to get it done as soon as I finished my step 4. I also figured that maybe doing this with someone who didn't know me or my story/past at all might give me another look at it or help let it go. So I decided to do mine with a pastor who was familiar with AA and have done many step 5's with people. I started off with just reading my step 4 but the more I read outloud and got off my chest the calmer I became and I ended up just talking about everything rather than just reading. The pastor was so kind and non judgmental. He made it very easy to just talk and get it all out. We also went threw and talked about not only my resentments but my fears as well. It was very healing. Now I'm not saying doing your step 5 with your sponsor is wrong by any means. It truly is what you are most comfortable with. The thing I want to say is get it done as soon as you finish your step 4 and don't be scared. I was amazed at how great I felt afterwards and how a light I felt. Step 4 is like you are covered in bricks and during your step 5 you are chipping away those bricks one resentment and painful memory at a time leaving you feeling lighter and free!

AA Member, 2 months sober

After completing my Step 4 the next obvious step was Step 5. When doing Step 5 you have the option of who you chose to share it with. I heard lots of things on Step 5, the one that came up the most was who to do my Step 5 with. There was a lot of misinformation about this and being unsure I was able to reach out and ask questions. It's a decision I put careful consideration into. After much thought I choose to do it with my sponsor. This step for me was to help me move forward on my journey in sobriety. So I had to make sure I wasn't going to hold on to things that would serve me no purpose. Even though I did a Step 4 I needed to make sure I carried it into my Step 5. Step 5 was just not about bearing my soul to another person and God, for me it was about clearing the way to a better me. I found out that I didn't have to get it perfect and I could do more than one. I just had to deal with what was keeping me from moving forward, what I was holding on to that kept me in my own head and what was hurting my heart so much that I wouldn't allow myself to heal. After doing Step 5 there was no flash of light or it felt like the weight of the world was lifted off my shoulders. For me it was a sense of peace. It paved the way for me to be good with God and myself in my heart. I came away with a feeling I'm going to be ok. There is so much more to this step some of it unexplainable as you just feel it in your heart. Some people have different reactions after doing their Step 5. I couldn't compare myself to these people as it's a very individual experience, our stories are different but with have one thing in common - Alcoholism. So I say get it done as it will truly amaze you with the freedom that comes from doing this step. As they say we cannot be full resentments or we are sure to drink again!! I for one was not willing to take that gamble. Today I choose to live.

Forever Alcoholic over 6 years sober



## 5 Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.



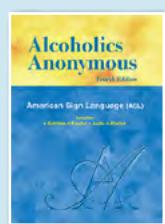
I admit all I did wrong.



AAWS encourages ordering of literature and other items via your local groups, Intergroups and Central Offices.

We are non-profit with a spiritual aim passed on to the newcomer.

The Little Big Book Prayer Book, The Little Big Book Quote Book, Milestone Medallions, Book Marks, and more. Big Books available in over 74 languages and accessibilities workbook for special needs.  
Call for prices. ASL Big Book now available!



Suggestions always welcome at Central Office.

What would your groups like to see as a service, event, newsletter contributions?



Submissions Deadline For Next Issue  
DECEMBER 15TH, 2021

Deer Tracks



FREE A.A. PAMPHLETS WITH EVERY LITERATURE ORDER

Central office is fully stocked with all your literature, A.A. medallion/chips, etc. needs.

WE ARE FULLY SELF-SUPPORTING THROUGH THE DONATIONS OF A.A. GROUPS & MEMBERS.

Central Office is operated by A.A. members, serves A.A. members, and is financially funded by A.A. members. Thank you!

We sincerely thank you for your support as this is passed on to the newcomer and since New York is our supplier you're supporting them, too.

STAY WELL!



DUE TO COVID-19 OUR OFFICE IS OPEN FRIDAYS 10 AM – NOON

TEXT OR EMAIL TO BOOK ANOTHER TIME: Please text or call 587-377-1117 or email centraloffice@reddeeraa.org