

This is A.A. General Service Conference-approved literature

# A Message to Corrections Professionals

Alcoholics Anonymous  
wants to work with you

## **What corrections professionals may want to know about A.A.**

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women whose primary purpose is to stay sober and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. A.A. work is done by A.A. members on a voluntary basis.

A.A. has no central authority and almost no structural organization. A.A. does operate a General Service Office in New York (which acts mostly as a clearinghouse for information, worldwide) and local central or intergroup offices.

Corrections professionals, A.A. members, and inmates themselves interested in starting a new A.A. group for inmates will get help from A.A.'s General Service Office. G.S.O. will provide the pamphlet "A.A. in Correctional Facilities," a Group Handbook and other A.A. literature.

Many local A.A. service committees will, upon request, provide informational presentations for your organization. Sessions can be tailored to meet your needs. A typical agenda might include one or several A.A. films and a presentation by one or more A.A. members on "What A.A. Is and What It Is Not."

Please check your local telephone directory or newspaper for the number of Alcoholics Anonymous.

### ***A.A. wants to work with you***

Cooperation with the professional community is an objective of A.A., and has been since our beginnings. We are always seeking to strengthen and expand our communication with you, and we welcome your comments and suggestions. They help us to work more effectively with you in achieving our common purpose: to help the alcoholic who still suffers.

### ***A.A. in correctional facilities***

There are approximately 2,300 A.A. groups meeting in correctional facilities throughout the United States and Canada. Each has a local arrangement between the administrators of the prison, work farm or jail and nearby A.A. groups.

When the most recent questionnaire was sent to administrators of correctional facilities where there are A.A. groups, there were 278 responses. Approximately 75 percent (208) were from state institutions for men, with some responses from federal institutions (19), women's (14), and those for youth (9). There were also a few county and city institutions.

All correctional facilities in the survey had at least one A.A. group. The average number of groups per institution was 1.25, and one prison reported ten A.A. groups. Attendance at A.A. meetings was voluntary in 90 percent of the correctional facilities.

A significant finding is the opinion of respondents that 50 percent of all inmates were sentenced for crimes in which alcohol abuse was an important factor. This percentage appears to be somewhat higher among inmates in facilities for young offenders. There was, however, a wide variation in this percentage as reported by individual institutions.

Corrections professionals seem to find promise in the

A.A. program for those inmates who do attend meetings. Some 96 percent of the respondents felt that an inmate's chance of making it on the outside was improved by participation in the A.A. program. And 90 percent regard the A.A. program as contributing to the objectives of the institution.

### ***Inmate groups***

The conditions under which an inmate group functions are established by the administration. These regulations are inviolable for A.A. visitors as well as for inmates.

Typically, local A.A. members sponsor groups in correctional facilities and work with personnel designated by administrators, as well as with officers of the "inside" A.A. group.

Once an inmate group gets through its early stages, it is very much like other A.A. groups. Except for scheduled visits from the A.A. sponsor and A.A. speakers from outside, there need be no extra "traffic" in the operation of an inmate A.A. group.

### ***Release and paroles***

The ultimate purpose of an inside A.A. group is to foster a sobriety that will carry through after inmate members return to society.

Experience shows that when they go promptly to A.A. on the outside, they are likely to stay sober—and free. However, if they put it off until they "get settled," they may never get to A.A.

A.A. can help minimize this risk. Before inmate A.A. members are actually released, there is usually time to get in touch with A.A. in the city or town where they plan to live. The inside sponsor and A.A. contacts can almost always make sure that a real welcome awaits newly-free people—not as former inmates, but as fellow members of A.A.

### ***What A.A. does NOT do***

A.A. does not: Furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover; solicit members; engage in or sponsor research; keep attendance records or case histories; join "councils" of social agencies; follow up or try to control its members; make medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses; provide drying-out or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, or any medical or psychiatric treatment; offer religious services; engage in education about alcohol; provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money or any other welfare or social services; provide domestic or vocational counseling; accept any money for its services or any contributions from non-A.A. sources; provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc.

### ***Singleness of purpose and problems other than alcohol***

Some professionals refer to alcoholism and drug addiction as "substance abuse" or "chemical dependency." Nonalcoholics are, therefore, sometimes introduced to A.A. and encouraged to attend A.A. meetings. Anyone may attend open A.A. meetings, but only those with a drinking problem may attend closed meetings.

## Some pamphlets which may be of interest

THIS IS A.A.

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44 QUESTIONS

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IS A.A. FOR YOU?

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YOUNG PEOPLE AND A.A.

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A.A. FOR THE WOMAN

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THE A.A. MEMBER - MEDICATIONS  
AND OTHER DRUGS

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DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DIFFERENT?

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON  
SPONSORSHIP

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IS THERE AN ALCOHOLIC IN YOUR LIFE?

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PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL

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WHAT HAPPENED TO JOE

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IT HAPPENED TO ALICE

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IF YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL

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HOW A.A. MEMBERS COOPERATE

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A.A. IN YOUR COMMUNITY

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A MEMBER'S-EYE VIEW OF  
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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UNDERSTANDING ANONYMITY

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