



News Sheet

Questions & Answers on Sponsorship

What is Sponsorship?

Alcoholics Anonymous began with sponsorship. When Bill W., only a few months sober, was stricken with a powerful urge to drink, this thought came to him: “You need another alcoholic to talk to. You need another alcoholic just as much as he needs you!”

He found Dr. Bob, who had been trying desperately and unsuccessfully to stop drinking, and out of their common need A.A. was born. The word “sponsor” was not used then; the Twelve Steps had not been written; but Bill carried the message to Dr. Bob, who in turn safeguarded his own sobriety by sponsoring countless other alcoholics. Through sharing, both of our co-founders discovered, their own sober lives could be enriched beyond measure.

In A.A., sponsor and sponsored meet as equals, just as Bill and Dr. Bob did. Essentially, the process of sponsorship is this: An alcoholic who has made some progress in the recovery program shares that experience on a continuous, individual basis with another alcoholic who is attempting to attain or maintain sobriety through A.A.

When we first begin to attend A.A. meetings, we may feel confused and sick and apprehensive. Although people at meetings respond to our questions willingly, that alone isn’t enough. Many other questions occur to us between meetings; we find that we need constant, close support as we begin learning how to “live sober.”

So we select an A.A. member with whom we can feel comfortable, someone with whom we can talk freely and confidentially, and we ask that person to be our sponsor.

This News Sheet is intended as an aid to Service in AA.

The views and opinions expressed in the News Sheet are not necessarily those of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland.

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PREAMBLE ©

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help

(Extracts from AAWS pamphlet — *Questions & Answers on Sponsorship*.

Available to purchase from GSO and CSO

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How does Sponsorship help the newcomer?

It assures the newcomer that there is at least one person who understands the situation fully and cares — one person to turn to without embarrassment when doubts, questions or problems linked to alcoholism arise. Sponsorship gives the newcomer an understanding, sympathetic friend when one is needed most. Sponsorship also provides the bridge enabling the new person to meet other alcoholics — in a home group and in other groups visited. How should a sponsor be chosen? The process of matching

newcomer and sponsor is as informal as everything else in A.A. Often, the new person simply approaches a more experienced member who seems compatible, and asks that member to be a sponsor. Most A.A.s are happy and grateful to receive such a request. An old A.A. saying suggests, “Stick with the winners.” It’s only reasonable to seek a sharing of experience with a member who seems to be using the A.A. program successfully in everyday life. There are no specific rules, but a good sponsor probably should be a year or more away from the last drink — and should seem to be enjoying sobriety.

If a newcomer has received a thorough course of treatment and indoctrination in an alcoholism program outside A.A., will a sponsor still be needed in A.A.? Is a special approach needed?

The alcoholism programs of government, industry, and other agencies are referring more and more alcoholics to A.A. These newcomers usually reach us in a physically dry condition, at a somewhat later stage in recovery than the shaking newcomer of the past. Detoxification is often weeks and even months in the past and the physical compulsion to drink is gone. But the mental obsession with alcohol may still be there, and, as A.A. groups that have

welcomed such newcomers generally believe, sponsorship is necessary as soon as possible to help overcome that obsession. This newcomer may have learned many medical facts about the disease of alcoholism. But learning about alcoholism in an institutional setting is one thing, and functioning as a sober alcoholic in a drinking world is quite another, we find. The sponsor is ready to share experience in how to cope with this situation. The sponsor’s personal experience can enable the newcomer to find guidance in applying A.A. principles to everyday life — just as any other newcomer does who arrives at A.A.’s doors for help.

When is a member ready for sponsorship responsibility?

Our primary purpose is to carry the message of A.A. to the alcoholic who still suffers. A.A. members who have actually worked the Steps of A.A. as a way to attain sobriety are often in the best position to share their experience, strength and hope.

The most successful sponsors seem to be men and women who have been in A.A. long enough to have a good understanding of the A.A. program outlined in the Twelve Steps. Many of us

think it wise to seek advice from our own sponsors about when we may be ready to take on the responsibility of sponsoring another alcoholic. The member who has been sober for months or years is usually — but not always — able to work more effectively with newcomers than the members whose experience is limited to only a few weeks or days. Thus, length of sobriety is a factor, but not the only factor, in successful sponsorship. Just as importantly, the sponsor should have capacity for understanding, patience, and the willingness to devote time and effort to new members.

The Man on the Bed

This full colour painting first appeared as a Grapevine centre spread in the December 1955 issue. It proved so popular that four colour prints were made available separately. The artist, Robert M., was a volunteer illustrator for the Grapevine, and in 1956 he presented the painting to AA co founder Bill W. In his thank you letter Bill wrote: "Your representation of 'The Man on the Bed' hangs in my studio at Bedford Hills.... The whole heart and essence of AA can be seen by just looking at it."



TRADITIONS CHECKLIST—TRADITION 4

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.

These questions were originally published in the AA Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Twelve Traditions that began in November 1969 and ran through September 1971. While they were originally intended primarily for individual use, many AA groups have since used them as a basis for wider discussion. THE AA GRAPEVINE INC., PO BOX 1980, GRAND CENTRAL STATION, NEW YORK, NY 10163-1980

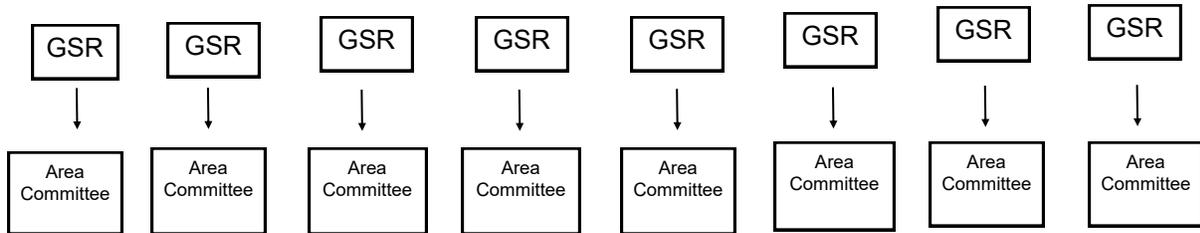
1. Do I insist that there are only a few right ways of doing things in AA?
2. Does my group always consider the welfare of the rest of AA?
3. Do I put down other members behaviour when it is different to mine, or do I learn from it?
4. Do I always bear in mind that, to those outsiders who know I am in AA, I may to some extent represent our entire beloved Fellowship?
5. Am I willing to help a newcomer to go to any lengths—his lengths, not mine—to say sober?
6. Do I share my knowledge of AA tools with other members who may not have heard of them?

STRUCTURE OF THE FELLOWSHIP

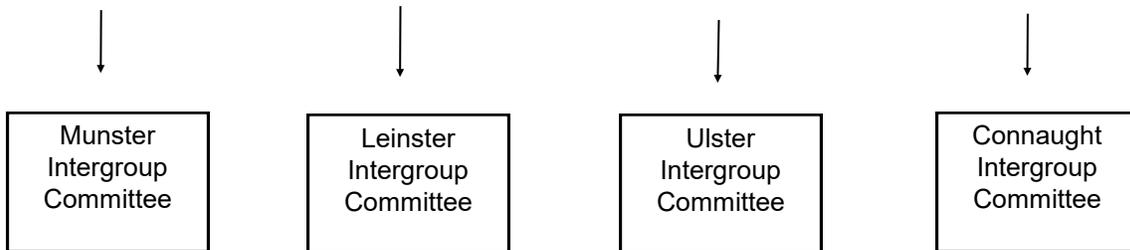
AA GROUPS (G)



TWO GSR's FROM EACH GROUP FORM AREA COMMITTEE



FOUR MEMBERS FROM EACH AREA COMMITTEE FORM PROVINCIAL INTERGROUP COMMITTEES



FOUR DELEGATES FROM EACH PROVINCIAL INTERGROUP TO GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE



All Ireland Convention 2020
Friday 17th to Sunday 19th April 2020
Bloomfield House Hotel, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath

See our website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie
for a full list of forthcoming events in Ireland and abroad.