

# AL-ANON guidelines

The Shared Experience Of Al-Anon and Alateen Members.

## Al-Anon/Alateen Area Conventions

G-20

An area convention is an occasion for Al-Anon and Alateen members to gather for fun and fellowship, to celebrate their beginnings, enhance their understanding of the program, and to find ways to attract new members.

*The term "convention" refers to fun and fellowship events; the term "conference" usually is reserved for service and business events.*

### PLANNING A CONVENTION

**Establishing a Committee** - When interest in a convention is expressed, there are several methods of establishing a committee. They include: the area world service committee (AWSC) selects a chairperson who chooses officers or asks members to volunteer to chair the supporting committees; the chairperson is chosen at the assembly; each Al-Anon and Alateen group selects a convention committee person to attend planning meetings and a committee is formed from among these members; a temporary committee of assembly and AWSC officers, past and present delegates and interested Al-Anon and Alateen members volunteer to select a date and investigate sites.

**Structure** - Although most conventions begin at the area assembly, once a convention is formed they often become a separate entity linked to the AWSC through a liaison. Most conventions are held at different locations within the area. When an area is selected, a permanent host committee can be formed, a chairperson selected and districts near the chosen site supply names of volunteers to serve on various subcommittees.

Yearly staggered rotation of committee officers provides for new and experienced planners to serve regardless of assembly elections and terms of office.

**Incorporation** - Some conventions become so large, that a nonprofit corporation is formed for the sole purpose of the annual convention. The decision to incorporate is a matter of area autonomy; incorporation is then undertaken in accordance with federal, state, or provincial nonprofit laws.

### CONVENTION COMMITTEES

The convention committee consists of the chairpersons of all the subcommittees. Subcommittees usually "do the footwork." They then bring their recommendations to the full committee for consensus (except on matters where the scope of their authority is defined in advance). Cooperation with area coordinators such as literature and public information increases committee effectiveness.

Depending on the size of the convention, the following officers and committees may be combined:



**The chairperson** helps select a convention site; directs activities during the convention; coordinates the activities of all the subcommittees; arranges committee meetings; coordinates activities with AA when there is AA participation; chairs the banquet and large meetings; maintains a record of activities, and makes progress reports to the area.

A **co-chairperson** works with the chairperson and usually is chairperson for the following year. Sometimes the co-chairperson serves as Alateen chairperson.

**The secretary** keeps a permanent record of meetings; informs committee members about meetings; sends thank you notes to speakers and other participants. The secretary may also be responsible for renting a post office box; arranging for podiums, platforms, and a public address system. Other duties may include selecting a taper to produce audio cassettes and handling orders for tapes, if the contracted taper does not assume this responsibility.

**The treasurer** is responsible for all money collected or disbursed in conjunction with the convention. This includes: opening a bank account; maintaining a checkbook; securing a cash box for receipts; paying committee bills; assisting in developing and monitoring a budget; keeping a permanent record of funds; and submitting reports regularly.

Note: Some areas bond treasurers.

**The program chairperson** presents a theme and program for approval to the convention committee; arranges for printing of the program; plans a luncheon or dinner banquet (sometimes a separate subcommittee); plans Al-Anon and Alateen meetings, including the schedule for workshops, panels, and speakers; designates rooms for meetings; and arranges for hosting and reimbursing speakers for transportation and lodging when necessary. If there is AA participation, the program chairperson helps to coordinate AA activities. The program chairperson may introduce speakers or arrange for appropriate introductions.

**The registration/ticket chairperson** is involved in site selection through personal contact with hotel personnel or staff at local chambers of commerce or convention bureaus; secures confirmation from the manager of the



facility outlining dates, meeting room costs, room arrangements, food, coffee, and banquet costs, parking security, etc.; supervises printing and distribution of housing, meal, and banquet tickets; keeps records of registration; works with treasurer regarding collections; prepares registration packets and procedures; and provides badges.



**The publicity chairperson** sends releases to press, radio, and TV; prepares flyers to send to groups, districts, and areas; sends information about the event to *The Forum* and *Alateen Talk*.

**The hospitality chairperson** serves as convention host; establishes a message center; arranges for sightseeing, dances, entertainment, and refreshments; distributes badges and identification ribbons; arranges services for disabled members; and medical services, when needed, for all attendees.



**The literature chairperson** orders Conference Approved Literature from the local literature distribution center or the WSO; creates displays and arranges for the sale of literature.



**The decorations chairperson** provides table centerpieces, program signs, stage, lobby, and hospitality room decorations; and orders flowers for the speakers.



**The refreshment chairperson** makes banquet menu arrangements; handles special dietary needs in cooperation with the registration ticket chairperson and hotel; orders refreshments for breaks and provides a "kitty" for donations; arranges for members to serve at refreshment tables; checks coffee level; and arranges for clean up.



**The entertainment chairperson** arranges for dance band or other entertainment and works with banquet and program people.

## COVERING EXPENSES

**Financing the event** - One method is for groups in the convention locality to form a host committee to raise money. Some areas have held their first convention by securing a loan ("seed fund") from the assembly. The loan is repaid after all bills have been paid.

A convention is usually self-supporting. Registration fees are set to cover estimated costs. Putting the tickets on sale in advance helps to establish a break even point in order to recover the cash outlay. To facilitate planning, it may be necessary to set deadlines for registration, ordering meals, or purchasing banquet tickets. Budgeting helps to balance receipts and expenditures. *Nothing spoils a pleasant event faster than the prospect of unpaid bills.*

**Proceeds** - Excess funds are often used to establish the next convention's "seed" fund. Since accumulating large sums of money is discouraged in keeping with Al-Anon's Traditions, excess funds over and above a seed fund for the next event can be donated to the district, Al-Anon information service, area, or the WSO.

## THE PROGRAM

**Theme** - A unifying theme focused on the Al-Anon program helps in planning sessions and give the event its own unique flavor. Themes can be based on those used at World Service Conferences, the slogans, and other program phrases.

**Types of Meetings** - Large open meetings provide a chance for everyone to get together, to hear general announcements, and meet those present. There is usually a luncheon or dinner banquet meeting with Al-Anon, Alateen, and/or AA speakers.

Panels and workshops led by several members followed by group discussion or a question and answer session gives everyone an opportunity to participate.

**Speakers** - Sending out a "speaker's questionnaire" that asks for information about previous speaking and service involvement along with the registration acknowledgment helps to locate willing and able members. For large meetings, some areas find listening to tapes helps to select a speaker. (Expenses are paid by the convention committee for all invited speakers who would not ordinarily attend the convention.) Asking the area delegate to suggest a speaker from among staff and volunteers at the World Service Office is another alternative.

**Anonymity** - Having the anonymity statement available for meeting leaders to read discourages the use of names by those covering the convention for newspapers, radio, or TV. Consult with all speakers on how they wish to be listed in programs and flyers. You may want to take a group conscience at the beginning of the event concerning taking photos of speakers or the audience. Looking in the index of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P24/27) and reading all reference to anonymity offers further tips.

**AA participation** - If the committee has invited AA participation, members of their host committee are usually invited to attend planning sessions.

If the Al-Anon committee receives the revenue from Al-Anon and AA registrations, they may be willing to pay AA expenses, or proceeds may be divided on the basis of registrations. Local AA meeting information and space for an AA meeting can be provided.

## SOME FINAL TIPS . . .

- involve as many people as you can — especially newcomers to service work
- consult the hotel convention staff before, during, and after the convention
- name a trouble shooter, one person who handles room changes, extra chairs, etc. (one area calls it "an angel.")
- understand that if something goes wrong, 99% of the time only the planning committee is aware of it
- recognize that once the convention starts, it usually has a "life of its own," so relax and enjoy the experience!

