

Introduction

Congratulations on becoming involved in the Bridging the Gap program which is a temporary contact program of Alcoholics Anonymous. This is exciting and rewarding 12th Step work where we really can help the alcoholic that is reaching out. Experience has shown that a large percentage of alcoholics being released from treatment end up drinking within a very short period of time. Therefore, it's crucial that the alcoholic makes it to that first meeting and gets to know recovering alcoholics in their own community.

The suggestions here for setting up and doing Bridging the Gap work are basic guidelines that have been found to work. We hope you find them helpful. However, keep in mind that dealing with various facilities may require a different approach. Each facility has its own set of guidelines. Sharing our experiences, suggestions, and questions keeps us all working together and sober.

If all the information looks overwhelming or confusing, relax. We're not perfect! While remaining focused, and doing things one step at a time, we have found things to eventually fall into place with the help of our Higher Power and others.

I Am Responsible ...

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that I am responsible.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of our Treatment/BTG Committee is to assist members to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to treatment facilities and outpatient settings. The Treatment/BTG Committee provides information about A.A. as well as literature and guidelines for setting up A.A. meetings in these facilities. These may include treatment centres, hospitals, psychiatric wards, nursing homes, youth non-correctional facilities, shelters, halfway houses etc. The Treatment/BTG Committee is in contact with A.A. members in their district who are willing to extend the hand of A.A. to those released to their community after completion of a treatment program.

It is the goal of the Area 79 Treatment/Accessibilities Committee to make this vital 12th Step work possible which may mean the difference between life and death for a fellow alcoholic.

In the November 1947 Grapevine magazine, Bill Wilson said: "With each passing year we increasingly realize the immense importance of adequately presenting the program to every prospect who is the least inclined to listen. The difference between a good approach and a bad one can mean life or death to those who seek our help. This careful considerate attention can nowhere be better given than in the confines of a hospital. More and more A.A. groups are adopting the idea of "sponsorship".

Suggested Guidelines

It is suggested that you:

1. Be an A.A. member enjoying a comfortable, stable sobriety, preferably for at least a year.
2. Try to make direct personal contact with the client while they are at the facility; either by telephone, by visiting the facility, or by attending a meeting together.
3. Make every effort to attend at least one meeting together on the day of the client's release.
4. Endeavour to take the newcomer to a variety of meetings, for at least two weeks, introducing them to other A.A.'s especially members who might have similar backgrounds or interests.
5. Familiarize the newcomer with A.A. Conference Approved books, pamphlets and a local meeting schedule.
6. Explain sponsorship and urge the newcomer to obtain a sponsor without delay. (Much information pertinent to sponsorship is found in the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship.")

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Action Checklist

DAY OF DISCHARGE: Consider the possibility of visiting the newcomer's home on the day of discharge. This greatly increases the chance of later attending a meeting together. Schedule a meeting, preferably the same day. Agreeing to pick up the newcomer at his/ her residence is always more successful than arranging to get together at the meeting place.

PICK UP: Take another A.A. member with you whenever possible, as with all 12 step calls. Bring a newcomer packet that is made up of free pamphlets along with a meeting schedule that can be prepared ahead of time. Be on time for whatever appointment is made.

BEFORE AND DURING THE MEETING: Take time to introduce the newcomer to as many A.A. members as possible and get phone numbers; including yours. Discreetly explain that there are no dues or fees and not to feel obligated to share or put money in the basket unless desired.

AFTER THE MEETING: Ask the newcomer if they would like to go for coffee. The newcomer may be confused about most of what has been said and heard. State that we try to "Keep it Simple," and take "One Day at a Time." Offer a ride to the next meeting, preferably one within the next few days.

Recommendations

- * After discharge, the newcomer may have changed their mind about further aid. Consider your responsibility ended after 3 attempts to telephone over several days.

Recommendations *cont.*

- * When calling a newcomer's home, remember that someone else may answer and may not know about the newcomer's desire to attend an A.A. meeting. Protect their anonymity by not disclosing your own association with A.A. or your purpose for calling.
- * Do not solicit members or try to persuade anyone to join. Do not make medical or psychological diagnoses, judgment about medications, engage in education or propaganda about alcohol, or provide domestic or vocational counselling.
- * Do not offer or imply the offer of any other service unless you personally want to perform that service (i.e. long-term taxi service). Don't accept any money for services.
- * Do not become involved in discussions about the newcomer's treatment. We have no opinion on outside issues. It may help to bear in mind that the goal of both A.A. and the Treatment facility is the same (the recovery of the alcoholic).

Conclusion

As a measure to strengthen the BTG Program, call or email the person on the BTG Committee that contacted you with the results of your efforts. Your feedback and ideas help to evaluate the health of the BTG program and aid in presenting it to other areas.

BC Yukon Area 79



Alcoholics Anonymous Bridging the Gap

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TEMPORARY CONTACTS

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