

Care & Conduct Package

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Our Common Understanding

Introduction

The long form of Tradition One reminds us:

“Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.”

Our Tradition of anonymity and our primary purpose guide everything we do.

From that foundation, we understand that safety in A.A. is a shared responsibility—it doesn’t belong to someone else, it belongs to all of us. **Care & Conduct** is one resource

available to the Area Service Committee (ASC) when a safety or conduct concern is brought forward.

Our [Common Understanding / Care & Conduct Committee](#) document is meant to provide background and a simple framework to help navigate and address safety concerns when they arise in the ASC.

To help support safety in Alcoholics Anonymous in Area 79, the ASC has developed the following Care & Conduct materials for the ASC.

This [package](#) can be accessed via the BC/Yukon Area 79 website, or by contacting the Chair of the Area 79 ASC to obtain a copy. The ASC is encouraged to read and review this document at the beginning of each panel.

How to use this document

If you experience, witness, or are having a concern about conduct, safety, harassment, bullying, discrimination, confidentiality, or another issue that is affecting your ability or another member's ability to serve on the ASC, you do not have to navigate this situation alone.

Your first point of contact can be the ASC Chair, unless the concern involves the ASC Chair, or you do not feel comfortable approaching the Chair. In that case, talk to your service/recovery sponsor, or member of the Care & Conduct Committee. The most important thing is that you feel safe.

The purpose is to provide guidance and a common understanding to all who serve on the ASC for BC/Yukon Area 79. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list of the expectations of ASC members in fulfilling their service commitment. It is intended to supplement the spiritual responsibilities and expectations set out in the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts of A.A. The ASC is expected to exhibit the utmost respect and courtesy in all its activities and interactions with each other, with members of Alcoholics Anonymous, and members of the public in carrying out its duties and responsibilities.

Confidentiality and Open Communication

Each ASC member understands and acknowledges that a common understanding of confidentiality plays an important role in carrying out their work. A member who brings forward a concern may ask for support in determining the appropriate next step. Concerns will be handled as confidentially as reasonably possible, recognizing that some circumstances may require information to be shared to address the concern appropriately.

Trust, responsibility, and communication are foundational principles of service in Alcoholics Anonymous. The ASC recognizes there is a spiritual balance between its responsibility to communicate with the fellowship and the need for confidentiality.

The work of the ASC and the committees established in Area 79 requires ASC members to engage in an honest exchange of views to develop and reach a fully informed group conscience. This ability is essential for the ASC to fulfill its responsibilities to the fellowship it serves. This can only happen in an environment where members trust that confidential information will not be disclosed except in accordance with the ASC's group conscience.

Creating an environment where open discussion can take place requires trust among members. It also requires a shared understanding that discussions and opinions expressed while reaching a group conscience remain confidential.

Confidentiality helps support members to speak freely without fear of harm or repercussions. It protects the integrity of the group conscience process by ensuring minority opinions can be fully heard and thoughtfully considered as the ASC works toward substantial unanimity. It places principles before personalities ensuring the group conscience is the focus, rather than individual comments. (*see Consulting Widely page 6.)

We recognize Concept III reminds us of our responsibility to report back to the fellowship. Inherent within our Right of Decision is the understanding that, as trusted servants, we must never use this right to exceed our defined authority or *"use it as an excuse for persistently failing to consult those who are entitled to be consulted before an important decision or action is taken."* (pg. C-11, Twelve Concepts for World Service)

However, there are circumstances where maintaining confidentiality is a necessary component of an ASC member's duty to act in the best interest of A.A. In some circumstances, the disclosure of information may be detrimental to individuals, compromise the integrity of the group conscience process, or negatively affect the Fellowship as a whole.

When determining what information is appropriate to share, the ASC will consider its responsibilities to the Fellowship in Area 79 (Concept III), the integrity of its procedures, and its responsibility to one another.

The Care & Conduct Committee does not make decisions about ASC members or impose discipline. Where appropriate, it gathers information and brings findings or recommendations to the ASC. The ASC remains the decision-making body.

Respecting One Another

Concept IX states that good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety.

We also understand that our Twelve Traditions, including that of group autonomy, do not place members above the law, and that when individuals act injuriously to others, they are accountable. Our First Tradition reminds us that all members and groups have a responsibility for the common welfare and safeguarding of the individual member and the duty to care for others with whom we serve.

While anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, anonymity does not allow for the protection of anyone to exploit or abuse our Fellowship or any individual member of A.A.

All ASC members, and anyone interacting with an ASC member, should expect to be treated with respect, courtesy, and dignity. All interactions, whether verbal or written, including social media posts and comments, should reflect our principles of respect, humility, and anonymity.

What constitutes a safety concern while serving on the ASC?

As stated in Safety and A.A.: Our Common Welfare (SM-209) *"Alcoholics Anonymous" is a microcosm of the larger society within which we live. Problems found in the world can also make their way into A.A. As we strive to share in a safe environment, alcoholics can focus on maintaining sobriety and the group can fulfill its primary purpose — to carry the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers.*" In that spirit, the ASC strives to adhere to the same type of expectations as found in society at large regarding safety.

Abuse and exploitation in all forms should not be tolerated at any level of the structure; our members have the right to feel safe participating in fellowship activities while serving Alcoholics Anonymous and going about A.A. service/business.

Consistent with our [Safety in A.A. Flyer \(F-228\)](#) and the laws of the province of British Columbia, harassment and bullying means threat, or intimidation, including any cyberbullying that may have the effect of interfering with the service performance of any other member, or affect the mental, emotional, or physical well-being of any other member.

Such bullying, harassment, and offensive behaviour, whether verbal or nonverbal, are destructive and unacceptable forms of discrimination that are contrary to A.A., spiritual principles, and our way of life in recovery. No one should have to tolerate racial, sexual

orientation, gender, age, stature, appearance, or any other form of discrimination, bullying, harassment, intentional harm or offensive behaviour when they serve on the ASC.

Pressuring A.A. members into a particular point of view or belief relating to medications, religion and other outside issues is unacceptable.

Regardless of intent, what matters most is the impact of the behaviour. ASC members must acknowledge the influence of their actions on their relationships with colleagues in service, other trusted servants, and members of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. No member of the ASC will use their service position to, in any way, attempt to intimidate, undermine, bully or harm another.

“...for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.” (Tradition 9, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p191).

It is important to note that one need not be the direct object of such behaviour to be concerned. A person who witnesses such conduct may feel compelled to take appropriate action to prevent it from continuing.

Safety During an Area Service Assignment

The safety of an ASC member takes priority over completing a service assignment. A member is not expected to remain in a situation they reasonably believe is unsafe to fulfil a service responsibility. While this issue is of utmost importance, addressing it falls outside the scope of the Care & Conduct Committee defined later in this document. This document is intended to describe expectations for how ASC members conduct business within the ASC itself.

Performance of Duties/Service Responsibilities

We presume good faith in those who accept service roles and approach concerns about performance with fairness and respect. For the purposes of this Care & Conduct Committee, non-performance means a persistent inability or unwillingness to carry out the reasonable responsibilities of an accepted service position, as outlined in the position's current job description. It does not refer to an occasional missed task, mistake, difference of opinion, or period when a member needs reasonable assistance.

When a concern about performance arises, members are encouraged to address the issue directly with the individual, or the Chair, or Care & Conduct Committee rather than raising it with the broader ASC. The purpose of addressing such concerns is not to discipline or punish a member, nor does any member have unqualified authority over another. Rather,

the intention is to understand the circumstances, offer support where appropriate, and protect the effective functioning of Area service.

A myriad of reasons could exist as to why a position is not being effectively filled. Where non-performance is persistent and interferes with the functioning of the ASC, or imposes on one or more members of the Area Service Committee, the Chair may work with the member and the ASC to determine an appropriate course of action in accordance with the spiritual principles found in our Traditions and Concepts. Avoiding or ignoring concerns related to non-performance is not a healthy solution and addressing them proactively and respectfully can be a growth opportunity for everyone involved.

Proactive process to include:

- Members are asked to communicate any challenges with performance or non-performance directly with the Chair or the Care & Conduct Committee
- Reviewing service resumes
- Ensure current job descriptions are reviewed by each member prior to accepting the position
- Incoming service member to meet with the former service member holding that position who will share experience, guidelines, and will endeavor to be available to help answer any questions
- Members are strongly encouraged to have a Service Sponsor upon acceptance of position
- ASC members encouraged to request reasonable assistance with their job duties as needed

Our Commitment to One Another

Every effort should be made by those serving on the ASC to help guide and support one another in fulfilling their service responsibilities. In some circumstances, responsibilities outlined within a service position may be adjusted to remove barriers that are impacting a member's ability to serve effectively. Members are encouraged to reach out to The Care & Conduct Committee, the Chair, or their ASC buddy for guidance and support when challenges arise.

By acknowledging this document, each member affirms the responsibilities and expectations of their position are clearly understood and agrees to carry out those duties to the best of their ability. Asking for help when struggling is an important part of how we support one another in service.

Action on Unacceptable behavior

In cases of unacceptable behaviour, we may refer to the following by Bill W: *This amount of charity does not mean that we cannot exclude those who disturb meetings in progress or seriously interfere with the functioning of the group. Such people can be asked to quiet down or go elsewhere, or, to come back when they are better able to participate.* (Letter from Bill W. 1969)

Each ASC member acknowledges they may be asked to step aside from their service position, whether elected or appointed, as is outlined in Concept 5 - *“The second part of Tradition Two provides us with the answer when it describes A.A. leaders as “trusted servants”. These servants must always be in readiness to do for the groups what the groups obviously cannot or should not do for themselves. (...) Like other free societies, we have to trust our trusted servants, knowing that in the unusual event that they should fail their responsibilities, we shall still have ample opportunity to recall and replace them.”* (The A.A. Service Manual, C-17)

In Area 79 we mirror the conference structure. Adopting provisions laid out in the A.A. Service Manual, if all other efforts have failed and the work of the ASC is being impeded, the ASC may take a vote by ballot to release a member from the committee. This vote would require 75% of the ASC in favour, to carry, and would be effective immediately. In keeping with Concept IV, ASC members *“refrain from voting on reports on their own past activities”*, therefore the member being considered is ineligible to vote. If the vote carries, the member will be released with love.

Such a decision would only be considered after the ASC is satisfied that every reasonable effort has been made to support the member. This may include seeking mediated solutions, offering loving support in both service and recovery, and encouraging the member to step aside voluntarily.

This process is not intended to remove people from the committee. **Its purpose is to address situations that have reached an impasse and where no reasonable path forward remains.** It provides a means for the ASC to make a formal decision when the only alternative would be broader disruption to the committee’s ability to serve.

In most circumstances, the reasons for a member stepping aside—or in rare cases being released with love by vote—would remain confidential and would not be disclosed to the fellowship of Area 79, unless the conduct directly impacted the Area as a whole.

“No matter how carefully we design our service structure of principles and relationships, no matter how well we apportion authority and responsibility, the operating results of our

structure can be no better than the personal performance of those who must man it and make it work. Good leadership cannot function well in a poorly designed structure. But weak leadership can hardly function at all, even in the best of structures. But once we have created a basically sound structure, that job is finished, except for occasional refinements.” (The A.A. Service Manual, Concept IX)

Nothing in this document is intended to prevent a member from fulfilling any legal obligation to report; contacting the proper authorities does not go against any A.A. Traditions and is meant to ensure the safety of all.

Consulting Widely

No ASC member is expected to navigate a difficult service situation alone. When facing a concern, members are encouraged to seek appropriate support and experience while respecting the confidentiality of those involved.

Depending on the circumstances, an ASC member may consult with:

- The ASC Chair
- Their service/recovery sponsor
- Their ASC buddy
- Another trusted servant with relevant experience, or
- A member of the Care & Conduct Committee.

Seeking support or experience does not, by itself, constitute making a formal complaint nor does asking the Care & Conduct Committee to review a matter.

When matters are challenging, experience has shown us that inviting an experienced person from outside the ASC can be helpful to mediate the process. This could include, but is not limited to, a past or current trusted servant, or, in some cases, a person from outside the fellowship who specializes on the issue.

Area 79 Care & Conduct Committee

Purpose and Scope

The Area 79 Care & Conduct Committee is established to support the physical and emotional safety of all who offer themselves for service on Area Service Committee (ASC). This document is not intended to be exhaustive and may not address every situation that could arise.

The **purpose** of the committee is to identify and address concerns brought forward regarding potential safety risks or behaviours that may affect or interfere with the work of the ASC or the well-being of its individual members. The goal is to help maintain a safe, respectful, and welcoming environment for everyone participating in Area service.

The committee may address concerns, complaints, or incidents involving alleged inappropriate conduct by ASC members, including bullying or harassment, breaches of confidentiality, failure to fulfill service responsibilities, and other behaviours that may compromise the safety, dignity, or effective functioning of the ASC.

As described in Concept X, which reads “*Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined*”, the Care & Conduct Committee is a service arm of the ASC and derives no more authority than any other ad hoc committee charged with looking into an issue. As per Tradition 9, the Care & Conduct Committee is “*directly responsible to those they serve*” and is guided by A.A.’s spiritual principles. It reports its findings and recommendations to the ASC; the ASC will ultimately make the decisions, if any are required.

The Care & Conduct Committee is not a decision-making, disciplinary, or enforcement body, and has no authority to remove, discipline, suspend, or otherwise direct an ASC member. The committee receives concerns, provides a safe and confidential avenue for members to seek assistance, gathers relevant information when appropriate, and reports its findings and recommendations to the ASC.

The committee’s **scope** extends to focus on both physical and emotional safety concerns in our interactions with each other. It does not extend to fellowship conduct toward ASC members when attending fellowship events.

Safety-related concerns (whether in person or online) addressed through their group conscience include:

- Threats of violence, bullying, or stalking
- Sexual harassment, predatory behavior
- Financial coercion
- Discrimination based on race, native language, culture, age, or sexual orientation
- Gender intolerance
- Pressure to adopt a particular view or belief relating to medical treatments and/or medications
- Pressure to adhere to a particular ideology, religious belief, custom or practice
- “*Accessibilities: The goal of our members and especially those who serve is to find solutions to help ensure every alcoholic can participate in A.A. meetings, Twelfth Step work, and A.A. service, for both physical and emotional safety. Everyone should*”

feel safe reporting an issue that might interfere with their ability to serve Alcoholics Anonymous at the Area level.” (Accessibilities Workbook, p1)

Committee Composition

Safety and unity are a shared responsibility, as outlined in our Traditions and Concepts; all who participate on the ASC have a duty to speak up, as part of the principle of participation. Therefore, the Area 79 Care & Conduct Committee will be comprised of four members drawn from a hat prior to the start of each year of the panel. A committee will serve a one-year term. The random and rotating composition of the members on the committee prevents a perception of ultimate authority. This is an entity that will function in accordance with our AA principles.

- **Chairperson:** The committee shall have a designated chairperson responsible for organizing committee meetings, coordinating with other committee members. The term of the chairperson should be on a quarterly rotation basis, with each member rotating into the Chair throughout the year.
- **Alternate Chairperson:** The alternate chairperson will be responsible for the above in the absence of the chairperson.
- An **alternate committee member** will also be selected from the hat in the event one of the Care & Conduct Committee members is the subject of a complaint, has a conflict, or finds themselves unable to serve on the committee for whatever reason.

Responsibilities

Most enquiries regarding safety issues on the ASC will be conducted internally. In complex, sensitive situations, an external auditor might be required. Enquiries will be:

- undertaken promptly and diligently, and be as thorough as necessary, given the circumstances
- fair and impartial, providing both the complainant and respondent equal treatment in evaluating the report
- sensitive to the interests of all parties involved, and maintain confidentiality
- focused on finding facts, including interviews of the complainant, respondent, and any witnesses
- provided where appropriate, from the complainant or person about whom the complaint is made, a request for assistance during the evaluation process

Concept IV reminds us: Trusted Servants, and all members of the ASC, are strongly encouraged to participate with the committee and provide any details of incidents they have experienced or witnessed.

The frequency with which the ASC Care & Conduct Committee will meet will be at the discretion of the committee. The committee will provide a written report with the autonomy

to decide how much detail is required and with a recommendation as to whether this needs to be reported to the fellowship at large whether it simply says: *“One item has been reported to the Care & Conduct Committee, it has been reviewed, and the matter is now closed”* or *“No activity to report at this time”*.

Receiving and Evaluating Safety Complaints

- Evaluations will include interviews with the complainant, the person about whom the complaint is made, and any witnesses. If the complainant and the person about whom the complaint is made agree on what happened, then the Care & Conduct Committee will not investigate any further and will recommend what corrective action to take, if necessary.
- The Care & Conduct Committee may be required to review emails, handwritten notes, photographs, or physical evidence from damage or theft.
- The Care & Conduct Committee may request access to Area 79 email accounts and files on Area laptops.

All ASC members should possess a genuine concern for the safety and well-being of ASC members, as well as a commitment to upholding the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous.

“Love and tolerance of others is our code.” (Alcoholics Anonymous, p84)

This document *“is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.”* (Alcoholics Anonymous, p164)

Resources

- [A.A. Guidelines on Accessibilities \(MG-16\)](#)
- [A.A. Guidelines on Safety and A.A. Groups \(Item MG-25\)](#)
- [Accessibilities checklist for Meetings and Groups SMF-208](#)
- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#)
- [Safety and A.A.: Our Common Welfare \(SMF-209\)](#)
- [Safety and A.A. Flyer \(Item F-228\)](#)
- [Safety Card for A.A. Groups \(Item F-211\)](#)
- [Twelve Concepts for World Service](#), A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Services, 2024-2026 Edition
- [Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions](#)