

**Combined Area Alateen Resolution Committee/Task Force
Recommendation
on the Implementation of the Alateen Aging Out Policy**

Acronyms used in this document

AATF -- Alateen/AMIAS Task Force
AMIAS -- Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service
ASBR -- Area Alateen Safety and Behavior Requirements
BOT -- Board of Trustees
GR -- Group Representative
SCWS -- Southern California World Service
WSO -- World Service Office (in Virginia Beach, VA)

Background

In April of 2017, the Board of Trustees (BOT) of Al-Anon Family Groups, Inc., which meets regularly in Virginia Beach at the World Service Office (WSO), received reports that some of our Area's Alateen meetings appeared not to be in compliance with the Area's Alateen Safety and Behavior Requirements (ASBR). These reports indicated that there were behaviors that were potentially endangering to Alateens who were participating in our meetings and events, and that this could negatively affect Alateen as a whole. In response to these reports, *the BOT withdrew the right of Southern California to register new Alateen meetings.*

In order to regain the right to register Alateen meetings and address the BOT's concerns, the GRs at the November, 2017 Assembly voted to create an Area AMIAS Alateen Task Force (AATF). The AATF was comprised of nine Al-Anon members, many of whom are also Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS), along with two SCWS Board members, one of whom was an SCWS officer. The AATF formed an Alateen Advisory Council of three Alateen members-at-large to provide an Alateen perspective on the AATF's deliberations.

The AATF was charged with reviewing every aspect of the Alateen program and the ASBRs. As a result of the AATF's deliberations, two major policy recommendations were voted in by the GRs at the May, 2018 Assembly.

1. Motion that all Alateen meetings will be required to have two certified (AMIAS) sponsors in attendance. This policy to go into effect on January 1, 2019.
2. Motion that the upper age limit for Alateen membership in our Area be 18 years of age (that is, they "age out" on their 19th birthday). This policy to go into effect on January 1, 2019.

Because of the changes the AATF made to our ASBRs—both policy and procedural changes--the BOT reversed their previous decision in 2018 and *granted the Area permission to resume registering Alateen meetings in Southern California.*

Background of changing when Alateens "age out" of Alateen.

The issue of lowering the upper age of Alateens has periodically been discussed within the Area, most notably at the May, 2013 Assembly. At that time, the Assembly approved a Motion to assign a Task Force to review the age of Alateen members; however, a Task Force was never formed for that purpose.

Our previous policy was that the upper age limit for Alateen membership in our Area was 20 (that is, they aged out on their 21st birthday). The context and history of lowering the upper age of Alateens is as follows:

1. In order to participate as Alateens, “*Members in their teen years who are legally adults agree to abide by the same requirements as minor Alateens when they attend Alateen meetings and events.*” (*Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual 2018-2021*, pg. 96). In California, teenagers become legal adults on their 18th birthday.
2. Once teenagers turn 18 years of age, they become more independent, self-directed, and autonomous, as is age-appropriate. It is natural for 19 and 20-year-olds to think of themselves—and behave—as legal adults.
3. There has been an inherent tension that has occurred when older Alateens, who are legal adults, have been expected to follow the same guidelines as younger Alateens. For example, as part of convention Event Plans, Alateens must be accompanied to the restroom. This safety guideline makes sense when we recognize that minor children who are navigating their way through hotel corridors should be accompanied by an adult who will ensure their safety. This same provision when applied to 19- or 20-year-old adults seems unnecessary and even absurd. However, *all* Alateens must abide by *all* of the safety guidelines.
4. Because of this tension, there have been a number of instances in the past when older Alateen members have wanted or expected to be able to behave in an autonomous and independent manner during Alateen events—again, this is behavior appropriate to their chronological age, but not appropriate for Alateen members who “abide by the same requirements as minor Alateens.” Some examples: they have wanted to be able to meet without having an AMIAS present, leave the site of the event to buy food at nearby restaurants, etc.
5. In addition, some of the most problematic behaviors between Alateen members have occurred between the older Alateens (19 and 20 year-olds) and younger members (15, 16, and 17).

Guidance from the *Service Manual 2018-2021*

The current policy regarding Alateen age range can be found on page 96 of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual 2018-2021*.

Experience and policies in other Areas

The AATF members consulted the following table, which shows the upper age limits in several other Areas. As can be seen on the table, a number of Areas have voted to make 18 the upper age of Alateens; that is, when an Alateen becomes a legal adult in those states, they must transition to Al-Anon. The AATF members agreed that changing the age to 17 (the Alateen’s 18th birthday) would be too radical and extreme for our members.

**ALATEENS
AGE OUT
ON THIS
BIRTHDAY**

Alaska	18	Nebraska	19
Baltimore	18	Nevada	18
California North	18	New Hampshire	18
Colorado	18	New York South	21
Connecticut	20	North Carolina	20
East Texas	18	North Florida	19
Georgia	20	Northern Illinois	18
Hawaii	18	Ohio	20
Idaho	18	Oregon	18
Indiana	19	South Dakota	18
Iowa	19*	South Florida	19
Kansas	20	Southern Illinois	18
Kentucky	21	Tennessee	20
Maryland/DC	19	Vermont	20
Massachusetts	19	Virginia	18
Missouri	18	West Texas	20
Montana	18	Wyoming	21

*19 for meetings; 20 for annual Alateen Convention

This shows that:

- in almost 50% of the Areas, Alateens age out on their 18th birthday
- 22% of Areas age out on their 19th birthday
- 22% age out on their 21st birthday
- the overall average is 18.9 years of age.

Why choose 18 (19th birthday) and not 19 (20th birthday)?

The compelling reason the AATF members chose 18 (19th birthday) was because most 18-year-olds are seniors in high school, and the end of high school is a natural “marker” between childhood and adulthood for many teenagers.

While still in high school, teenagers typically continue to think of themselves as students and “dependents” even though they become legal adults on their 18th birthday. The summer and fall after their senior year is a transition time for most 18-year-olds, both physically and psychologically. After they graduate from high school, they often join the workforce or go to college. They begin to think of themselves, understandably and naturally, as independent adults, that is, as more autonomous and in charge of their choices and decisions.

It is natural and healthy for Alateens who are 18 to increasingly identify as adults (and, perhaps, as Al-Anons, rather than Alateens). As that psychological transition to adulthood is happening, it

is also natural for them to resist being “treated like children.” The ASBRs, however, *are created for the safety of children*. For this reason, it seemed appropriate to time the upper age to coincide with this age-related transition period.

Utilizing the KBDM process, the GRs at the May Assembly asked questions and voiced their opinions about lowering the upper age of Alateens. They were asked if they were *ready* to vote on the issue, and a majority voted “yes” (92=Yes; 41=No; 4=Abstained). The Motion to change the upper age to 18 (19th birthday) passed (111 = Yes; 25 = No; 8 = Abstained).

After the “Aging Out” Motion was passed, two issues were brought up by speakers which had not previously been addressed.

1. It was pointed out that the policy would adversely affect current, older Alateens in various service positions who have already been elected to be Chairs or Committee members of Area conventions. These positions include the current SCWS Area Alateen Member Coordinator, AFG Convention Alateen Chair, SFVAA Convention Alateen Chair, and possibly other conventions. The Motion as stated (i.e., the effective date is January 1, 2019) would require them to step down from these service positions, as they would *age out before they could complete their service term*.
2. All current Alateen members 19 and older would be required to abruptly transition out of Alateen at one time, on January 1, 2019. We do not have a census of how many Alateens this would affect and the policy, as stated, would not allow for a transition for older Alateens.

The question became: How might the policy be implemented without disrupting *current* Alateen members who, under the existing policy, had expected to age out on their 21st birthday?

Current Issue – How to carry out the “aging out” policy approved at the May Assembly.

Several Al-Anon members raised the issue of creating an exception to cover *current* Alateens who expected to be able to stay in Alateen until their 21st birthday. Current Alateen members would be able to gradually adjust to the new expectations. *New* members of Alateen, who join after January 1, 2019, are automatically covered by the new policy.

Recommendation

The Alateen Resolution Committee*, along with two additional volunteers from the AATF, sought a solution that would implement the policy, while creating the least amount of disruption in the lives of Area Alateens and the programs of Alateen and Al-Anon in Southern California.

The Committee proposed an addendum that would support the spirit of the original Assembly vote (lowering the upper age of Alateen) while also providing a way for current members to *gradually* age out. It would also allow Alateens elected to Area leadership positions to complete their terms.

Based on these discussions, the Area Alateen Resolution Committee/Task Force recommends the approval of the following addendum to the original May 18, 2018 Motion:

In order to implement the new “aging out” policy, there is a need to transition *current* Alateens who will be affected by this policy. **Therefore, all current Alateen members who are 17 years or older as of January 1, 2019 will age out on January 1, 2021 or their 21st birthday, whichever comes first.**

Below are two different representations of the Aging Out process:

Current Age	Age Out on This Birthday or by January 1, 2021 (whichever comes first)
18, 19, 20	21 st Birthday
17	20 th Birthday
16 & younger	19 th Birthday

Alateen Aging Out Projection Table

Current Age in 2018	Age in 2019	Age in 2020	Effective Jan. 1, 2021
20	21		
19	20	21	
18	19	20	21
17	18	19	20
16	17	18	19

All Alateen members, including those who are aging out, are welcome, and strongly encouraged, to attend Al-Anon meetings, including meetings that are focused on younger members of Al-Anon.

* The Alateen Resolution Committee is the decision-making entity for issues pertaining to Alateen. This seven-person committee is comprised of the following Al-Anon and Alateen members:

- (1) Area Alateen Communications Coordinator
- (2) Area Alateen Events Coordinator
- (3) Area Alateen Member Coordinator
- (4) Area Alateen Process Person
- (5) Area Alateen Sponsor Coordinator
- (6) Elected Area Officer appointed by the Area Chair
- (7) An AMIAS-at-Large appointed by the Area Chair

KBDM Questions and Answers

1. What do we know about our members’ (and prospective members’) needs, wants and preferences that relate to this issue?
(How important is it? Is it what our current members want? How will it affect newcomers? What purpose would this serve? Is it necessary? Is it helpful?)

We know that Area Alateens value the Alateen Program. In general, many Alateens did not support the decision to change the upper age limit for membership in Alateen.

We also know that Alateens/Alateen meetings are grossly underrepresented at the Area level because so few Alateen meetings have Group Representatives (GRs). As a result, Alateens had very limited voice and vote on Alateen issues at Area Assemblies.

Having acknowledged that, we also know that some of the most problematic situations in Alateen have involved the oldest Alateen members, as noted above. This change in policy is necessary because Alateen will be comprised of teenagers, rather than legal adults.

New Alateen members will know—and expect—to be Alateen members through their 18th year, or senior year in high school. They will be strongly encouraged to attend Al-Anon meetings, particularly meetings that are focused on younger members of Al-Anon. It is the hope of the Area Alateen Resolution Committee that members of the Young at Heart Al-Anon meetings will actively reach out to Alateens who are 18 years of age, in order to support their transition to Al-Anon meetings.

2. What do we know about the resources and our vision for Al-Anon and our meetings that are relevant to this issue?
(What are our resources? Can we afford it? Do we have enough volunteers to make it happen? Do we have any background information in our archives that can help us answer this question?)

There are no financial issues involved in this decision. There is no significant effect on the AMIAS volunteers.

3. What do we know about our “culture” and “environment” that is relevant to this discussion?

In other words--Will our decision be consistent with our principles, policies, and legacies: The Twelve Steps, Traditions, and Concepts? What are the implications of our choices? What are the pros and cons? (How would this affect our meeting? How would this affect our fellowship? Newcomers? Al-Anon (and A.A.) as a whole? Does our *Service Manual* provide any guidance about this issue? Pros/Cons: The advantages of this change might be? The disadvantages might be?)

We discussed the possibility that some Alateen members might not be honest about their age in an attempt to evade the policy. Currently and historically, the age limit for Alateen members is and has been adhered to on the basis of trust. There is and has been no policy or need identified in the Southern California Area for ensuring compliance with the current age limit. We acknowledge that it is a possibility that some Alateens could not be truthful about their age, but we do not anticipate that it would be a significant issue under the new policy.

The principles of the Al-Anon program and the following Traditions and Concepts, in particular, were the guides we used to develop this recommendation. For the purposes of space, we are not writing out each one but refer you to our *Service Manual* for exact quotes:

- Traditions One, Three, and Twelve
- Concepts One, Three, Four, Five, Nine and Twelve
- Warranties Two, Three, Four and Five

Some of the “cons” of the proposed addendum might be:

1. The length of time proposed (until January 1, 2021) leaves open a two-year window for problems to arise from the participation of adult Alateens in meetings and events, thus continuing some of the potential problems the new age limit is intended to address;
2. Might enable the most immature Alateens who oppose the new age limit to avoid the real-world consequences of having to become adults and/or transition to Al-Anon meetings;
3. The convention-related issues could be resolved by a far more limited provision that applies only to the few Alateens who have already been elected to service positions at Conventions;
4. Might “weight the system” so that older Alateens will continue to be elected to leadership positions more frequently than younger members. This might be detrimental to younger Alateens who would “rise to the occasion” and become leaders at younger ages, if those positions were open to them and not taken by older members;
5. Shorter, more limited options are available, using lower ages (that is, 18 and older, not 17 or older) and/or establishing a shorter ultimate cut-off date (that is, January 1, 2020 rather than 2021).

In the spirit of our principles, we observe that although this issue was not specifically included in the Motion approved at the May 19, 2018 Assembly, that it is implied by our principles, and that the addendum is reasonable, fair and does not cause harm or adversity to any Al-Anon or Alateen member.

4. What are the ethical implications of our choices? Would we be practicing our “principles in all our affairs”?
(Is our decision legal? Will our decision help us fulfill our primary purpose? If we decide to take an action, will it be the “right” thing to do?)

Currently, the are our options:

Option 1:

Implement the policy as voted on by the GRs to exclude participation of anyone over the age of 18 as of January 1, 2019.

As the Motion requires all current Alateens age 19 and older to no longer participate as Alateens as of January 1, 2019, we run the risk of disrupting the unity of Alateen and Al-Anon members, as well as alienating and losing the trust of a significant number of Alateens. This is not consistent with Tradition One, creating unity for the greatest number. Trust among many

Alateens is already strained as a result of decisions that have been made regarding Alateen over the past few years.

Option 2:

Approve the addendum to the original Motion so that current Alateens can age out over time, based on their current age. That is, all current Alateen members who are 17 years or older as of January 1, 2019 will age out on January 1, 2021 or on their 21st birthday, whichever comes first.

All *new* Alateen members who join *after* January 1, 2019, will age out on their 19th birthdays, per the new policy. As of January, 2021, there would be no Alateen members over the age of 18.

This second option will accomplish the spirit of the new policy and allow current members to gradually age out. It also allows currently elected Alateens to complete their terms.

All Alateen members, especially older Alateens who are aging out, are welcome, and strongly encouraged, to attend Al-Anon meetings, including meetings that are focused on younger members of Al-Anon.

Whatever option we recommend, there is a possibility some Alateen members might not be honest about their age in order to evade the policy, as stated earlier. We acknowledge that this is a possibility, but we do not anticipate that it would be a significant issue. It is our hope that they will practice the Al-Anon/Alateen principles in all their affairs.

5. What do we wish we knew, but don't?
(Might our decision have unintended consequences? We might need to do some additional work or research to help us make a sound decision.)

We don't know how this addendum will affect current Alateens below the age of 16, who may be disappointed that they cannot remain in Alateen until their 21st birthday. We won't know for a few years how the new policy will affect rotation of leadership.

Final statement:

After our best efforts to answer these questions, and through listening with open minds and hearts, we trusted in each other and our Higher Power, and made a decision. The entire group supports the decision and recommends the approval of the following addendum to the May, 2018 Motion:

All current Alateen members who are 17 years or older as of January 1, 2019 will age out on January 1, 2021 or their 21st birthday, whichever comes first.