

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, to 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:

1. The Area World Service Committee (AWSC) selects a chairperson who chooses officers or asks members to volunteer to chair the supporting committees.
2. The chairperson is chosen at the Assembly; each Al-Anon and Alateen group or District selects a convention committee person to attend planning meetings and a committee is formed from among these members.
3. 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 a location is selected, a host committee can be formed, a chairperson selected, and Districts near the chosen site supply names of volunteers to serve on various subcommittees. Some Areas have ongoing contracts with hotels and have bank accounts for conventions.

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. The fact that a convention is incorporated does not mean that it is a non-Al-Anon event. Al-Anon conventions adhere to the principles of the program and are financially accountable to the fellowship which they serve.

Note - All conventions and events that include Alateen participation must comply with the Area Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements of the Al-Anon Area in which the convention/event is held. Only Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) who are currently certified

through the Area’s Alateen process may serve as Alateen Group Sponsors, chaperones, or hold other positions of service that include direct responsibility and care for Alateens at the conventions/events.

A.A. participation - If the Al-Anon committee has invited A.A. to participate, the A.A. chairperson, selected by A.A., is usually invited to attend planning sessions. Al-Anon provides A.A. with meeting space and guidelines for specific expenses (speakers, publicity, volunteer sign-up, etc.). If the Al-Anon committee receives the revenue from both Al-Anon and A.A. registrations, the committee pays all convention expenses, including those for A.A. An alternative is that proceeds may be divided on the basis of registrations, with each fellowship paying its own expenses. Make certain there is an agreement, preferably in writing early in the planning process, concerning A.A. participation and fiscal responsibilities. A procedure for submitting expenses is needed if Al-Anon is providing reimbursement. Local A.A. meeting information can be provided.

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 Outreach, increases committee effectiveness. Committee members should have a sound understanding of the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Service as well as the ability to work and cooperate with others.

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

Chairperson

- Helps select a convention site (if the Area does not have an ongoing hotel contract).
- Meets with the committee and subcommittees on a regular basis.
- Attends and reports to the AWSC.

- Maintains contact with hotel staff before, during, and after the convention.
- Makes sure that all hotel requirements are met.
- Directs activities during the convention.
- Coordinates the activities of all the subcommittees.
- Arranges committee meetings.
- Coordinates activities with A.A. when there is A.A. participation (unless otherwise assigned).
- Chairs the convention meetings assigned in the convention's procedures (may be compiled into a "convention manual").
- Maintains a record of activities.
- Reports to the Assembly/AWSC.

Co-Chairperson

- Works on duties assigned by the Chairperson (may serve as the Chairperson for the following year).

Secretary

- Keeps and distributes meeting minutes.
- Informs committee members about meetings in a timely manner.
- Handles correspondence relating to the convention.
- Sends thank-you notes to speakers and other participants.
- May also be responsible for renting a post office box.
- Arranges for equipment (podiums, audio/visual, etc.), if assigned.
- Selects an audio recorder for recording the convention speakers, if assigned.
- Submits regular reports to the committee.

Treasurer

- Assists in developing and monitoring a budget.
- Collects all money and disburses in conjunction with the convention budget.
- Maintains a checkbook.
- Secures a cash box for receipts.
- Reviews and pays committee bills.
- Keeps a petty cash fund for small expenses.
- Keeps a permanent record of funds.
- Submits regular reports to the committee.
- Provides final report to be submitted to Assembly/AWSC.

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 this is assigned to a separate subcommittee).

- Consults the Treasurer for budget information if speakers are given complimentary rooms and/or being reimbursed for transportation expenses.
- Plans Al-Anon meetings, including the schedule for workshops, panels, and speakers using the convention committee's Al-Anon/Alateen speaker selection criteria. (See "Tips for Selection of Speakers.")
- Works with the Alateen Chairperson for the Alateen program.
- Designates rooms for meetings.
- Coordinates A.A. activities when there is A.A. participation, if assigned.
- Introduces speakers or arranges for appropriate introductions.
- Submits regular reports to the committee.

Alateen Chairperson/Co-Chairperson

- Is a certified Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS); it is helpful to currently be, or have been, an Alateen Group Sponsor.
- An Alateen member may serve as the Co-Chairperson.
- Prepares a program that coordinates with the Al-Anon program.
- Reviews Alateen speaker or panel recommendations with the convention committee.
- Submits regular reports to the committee.

Many conventions welcome members from outside the host Area. AMIAS from other Areas who wish to bring Alateens need approval from their Area before registering/transporting the Alateen members. The hosting Al-Anon Area can vote to accept another Area's AMIAS certification on a temporary basis for the duration of the convention provided that the other Area's Area Alateen Process Person verifies the AMIAS certification(s).

Registration/Ticket Chairperson

- Oversees the printing and distribution of housing, meal, and banquet tickets.
- Keeps records of registration.
- Works with Treasurer regarding collections.
- Prepares registration packets and procedures.
- Provides badges.
- Submits regular reports to the committee.

Publicity Chairperson

- Prepares flyers to send to groups, Districts, and Areas.
- Submits information about the event to the WSO for the WSO calendars.
- Sends releases to press, radio, and TV, when assigned.
- Submits regular reports to the committee.

Hospitality/Banquet Chairperson

- Serves as convention host.
- Makes banquet menu arrangements and handles special dietary needs.
- Arranges for dances, entertainment, and refreshments.
- Arranges for members to volunteer in the hospitality room.
- Distributes badges and identification ribbons.
- Arranges services for disabled members, when needed, and medical services for all attendees.
- Submits regular reports to the committee.

Literature Chairperson

- Orders Conference Approved Literature (CAL) from the local Literature Distribution Center (LDC) or the World Service Office (WSO).*
- Creates displays and arranges for the sale of literature.
- Considers providing a supply of inexpensive CAL to give away at a literature table.
- Submits regular reports to the committee.

*Large quantities of books and pamphlets to be sold at a convention can be purchased from an LDC or the WSO. Orders should be placed at least six weeks in advance of the event. Contact the WSO to order a supply of descriptive catalogs and order forms for distribution at the convention.

Decorations Chairperson

- Provides table centerpieces, if needed.
- Provides program signs, stage, lobby, and hospitality room decorations.
- Submits regular reports to the committee.

Entertainment Chairperson

- Arranges for dance band, disc jockey, skits, or other entertainment.
- Works with banquet and program chairpersons.
- Submits regular reports to the committee.

Covering expenses

Financing the event - One method is for groups in the convention locality to form a host committee, sometimes called the “Ways and Means 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 expenses listed on the budget. 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, and/or the WSO.

The Program

Theme - A unifying theme focused on the Al-Anon program helps in planning sessions and gives 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 Families, Friends, and Observers Welcome 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 A.A. speakers. Panels and workshops led by several members followed by group discussion or question and answer sessions give everyone an opportunity to participate.

Speakers - The convention committee determines if a speaker meets the convention criteria, keeping in mind the principles of the Al-Anon program. 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 that asking a potential speaker for a recording is beneficial; however, not all speakers have recordings. Speakers from other Areas or the WSO may also be invited. Current and Past Area Delegates are a good resource for helping the committee find speakers. The expenses, such as travel, hotel, registration, and meals, are paid by the convention committee for invited speakers from other Areas and the WSO.

Tips for Selection of Speakers

- Keep in mind that speakers are invited to carry the Al-Anon/Alateen message of recovery by sharing their experience, strength, and hope. Speakers describe how they have changed by applying the principles of the program to their lives.
- Speakers keep the Al-Anon focus and maintain their anonymity regarding other Twelve Step programs.

Anonymity - Having an anonymity statement available for meeting leaders to read, discourages the use of names by those covering the convention for newspapers, radio, TV, and electronic media. 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. See “Anonymity” in the “Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work” section,

and “Anonymity at Open Meetings and Al-Anon/Alateen Events” in the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies” section, of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27).

If photos are permitted at the convention, consider providing a statement at meetings reminding members about anonymity online and not to post photos that break anonymity. It is important to keep in mind that some attendees may not want their photograph taken and to seek permission first.

Things to consider:

- Members’ special needs (American Sign Language [ASL], interpretation, ramps, etc.)
- Audio/visual equipment.
- Translation equipment.

Tips about Audio Recording:

- Depending on the terms the Area agrees to in the contract with the recording company, the recordings become the property of the recording company and may be distributed via multimedia outlets, including the internet, and sold on the recording company’s website, unless the speaker specifically prohibits this when signing the release.
- Provide speakers with information about ways the recordings may be distributed and tips on how to maintain anonymity. It is up to the speakers when they consent to having their talk recorded to protect their anonymity by using their first name only or a pseudonym and to maintain the anonymity of other Al-Anon, Alateen, and A.A. members in their talk. See the *Members Interested in Speaking* guideline (G-1).

Some final Tips:

- Involve as many people as you can—especially newcomers to service work.
- See the guidelines *Al-Anon/Alateen Participation in an A.A. Convention* (G-7) and *Alateen Conferences* (G-16).
- 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!

After the Convention

A final meeting should be held to evaluate the convention. Helpful reports can then be recorded in the convention file for the next Al-Anon committee.

