

Access to Alcoholics Anonymous

"Let us never fear needed change. Certainly we have to discriminate between changes for the worse and changes for the better. But once a need becomes clearly apparent in an individual, a group, or in AA as a whole...we cannot stand still and look the other way. The essence of all growth is a willingness to change for the better and then an unremitting willingness to shoulder whatever the responsibility."

By Bill W. from 1965 Grapevine article

"Whenever anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help,
I want the hand of A.A. always to be there.
And for that: I Am Responsible."

Bill W. co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous
(at the 1965 International Convention in Toronto, Canada)

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Research data collected: July 1999 – February 2001

In July of 1999, the District 21 Access Committee started researching how AA groups address Access Needs. A national survey was written by Susan (District 21 Access Committee member) and a draft of that survey was sent to some of the Area level service representatives. We received input and guidance concerning the content from Oregon Area Chair Bruce, Bob P, Jonathan, and others. The survey was edited per their suggestions. In May 2000 the District 21 AC mailed the survey to all the Access Chairs listed with the General Service Office.

This research report is a collection of information gathered from the survey, AA Guidelines, Box 459/Grapevine articles, the Twelve Step & Twelve Traditions AA book, AA groups, committees, and members throughout the US / Canada that have worked to provide access to AA for everyone who reaches out for it.

CONTENTS	Page
General information	4
District Access Committees	5
Area Access Committees	6
Access for AA members who are isolated	7
Access for AA members who are Deaf	10
Employing special workers	14
Access for AA members who are Hard of Hearing	18
Access for AA members who are oral deaf or late-deafened	19
Access for AA members whose primary language is not English or English speaking AA members who have limited English reading and writing skills.	20

Access for AA members who have a speech disability	21
Access for AA members who are blind or have low vision	22
Access for AA members who have had head injuries or are dual diagnosed.	23
Access for AA members who have a mobility loss	24
Open meetings and the ADA	25
Meeting codes, symbols, and signage	26
Access presentations, workshops and booths displays	27
Biggest challenge for Access Committees	28
Access information resources	29

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❖ **General information:**

- **AA Guidelines MG-16: RESPECT FOR THE DIGNITY OF OTHERS HAS TO BE THE FOUNDATION FOR ALL OUR EFFORTS TO CARRY THE MESSAGE TO ALCOHOLICS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS...**
- **The best resource you have to find out how to make an AA meeting accessible is to ask the person with the need, “What is your access need and what are some suggestions for how we can help provide access to AA for you”?**
- Access / Accessibility are the preferred terms used to refer to access service positions or committees. Some use the term Special Needs.
 - **AA Guidelines MG-16:** ...Since the goal is to make AA accessible, some committees refer to themselves as Accessibilities Committees.
- What is the purpose of Access Committees?
 - **AA Guidelines MG-16:** ...explore, develop and offer resources to make the AA message and participation in our program available to everyone who reaches out for it.
- Some areas/districts have an Access Chair person or representative rather than a committee. Other areas have only an area level Access Chair person and no district Access Chairs or Committees.
- Access Committees often work in cooperation with PI, CPC, CTF, and CCF Committees.
 - **AA Guidelines MG-16:** In the interest of good communication and working together, Special Need Committees are encouraged to keep their area committees and local central/intergroup offices informed of their activities. It is also helpful to work closely with committees handling Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community in terms of keeping the public and appropriate agencies informed about AA being accessible to alcoholics with special needs.

❖ **District Access Committee**

- District Access Committees are most often started when an AA member volunteers for the service position. All districts need an Access Chair.
- The primary focus of each Committee varies on the access needs requested.
- Some districts have had an Access Chair person/Committee off and on for years, responding to the needs of AA members in the district.
- Some districts have active Committees with several volunteers.
- Some Access Committees work in cooperation with other service committees.
- Some Access Committees work with the district groups and intergroups/central service offices to schedule interpreted meetings on a request basis.
- District Access budget is set up through district budget.
 - There are a variety of ways that districts have collected funds to employ special workers.
 - From the general district funds
 - Group donations that are specifically for employing special workers for interpreting or other access related expenses
 - ◆ Some groups pass an Access/SI can.
 - ◆ Some groups donate a % of their funds for Access.
 - ◆ Individual AA members donate funds for Access.
 - Fundraiser AA events.
- The districts that do not have an official Access Chair or committee may have:
 - Volunteers for taking meetings to AA members who are house/hospital bound.
 - Volunteers who help improve the number of meetings accessible for people who have mobility loss or use wheelchairs.
 - Have an interpreting budget within the district budget.
 - Intergroup/central service office (the district donates funds to) pays the interpreting expenses.
- Sample district access survey page 35-36
- Sample group access check list page 37-38

❖ **Area Access Committees**

- The primary focus of each Access Committee varies according to the access needs requested.
- Access Committees work in cooperation with other service committees as needed.
- Committees provide access information to groups, districts, and intergroups/central service offices.
- Some Access Committees have workshops.
- Some Committees work with districts and intergroups/central service offices to provide interpreted meetings on a request basis from Deaf AA members.
- For some of the Committees the area expenses are paid from area budget. Some Access Committees budgets are within the CPC or PI area budget.

- ❖ **Isolated members: Shift workers, parents of young children, elderly, house bound / hospital bound including nursing and foster homes.** The below information is a list of what some committees have done to help provide access.
 - Volunteer signup sheet: Distribute volunteer signup sheets to AA groups. The signup sheets include the type of service work they are volunteering for, name, phone, e-mail, times, and days available. Sometimes both the AA group and the Access Committee keep a copy of the volunteer signup sheets.
 - Rides to meetings: (volunteer signup sheet)
 - Provide public transportation information.
 - Meeting brought to them: (volunteer signup sheet)
 - AA meetings by phone: Volunteer list signup sheet for people willing to help set up phone conference call meetings, especially for those without computers.
 - Training AA members to use the internet for AA meetings: (volunteer signup sheet)
 - Online AA meetings.
 - Teaching AA members how to communicate with other members using a variety of the instant message programs available on the internet. This enables private real-time communications between AA members.
 - Accessing free internet / e-mail accounts through public library.
 - Intergroups/central service offices and districts sometimes set up a computer for AA members to use to access online AA meetings. This has been helpful for Deaf, hard of hearing, deafened, and other AA members with limited access to AA meetings.
 - AA meeting in Print
 - AA Grapevine <http://www.aagrapevine.org>
 - Mailing Address: The Grapevine, P.O. Box 1980, Grand Central Station New York, N.Y. 10163-1980
 - Telephone orders (credit card only): (212) 870-3404 (Monday - Friday, 9:00 am - 4:45 pm EST)

- AA Loners Internationalists Meeting Newsletter: An AA meeting-by-mail for Loners, Internationalists, and other AA's who cannot attend regular AA meetings. For a copy of the newsletter please write and request: (F-18) Loners International Meeting Newsletter
 - Write: Attention: Special Needs, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
 - E-mail: lim@aa.org
 - Phone: 1-212-870-3312 Voice Call weekdays from 8:00 PM to 4:45 PM Eastern Time. 24 hour fax line: 1-800-437-3584; 1-212-870-3137
- AA meeting on Tape
 - Tapeworms: Correspondence group by tape for those cannot attend regular AA meetings.
 - Write: Attention: Special Needs, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163
 - E-mail: specialneeds@aa.org
 - Phone: 1-212-870-3312 Voice Call weekdays from 8:00 PM to 4:45 PM Eastern Time. 24 hour fax line: 1-800-437-3584; 1-212-870-3137
- Loan library: Normally stocked with AA literature from the Special Needs catalog and AA Conference-Approved literature and other Service Material in the primary languages spoken in that area.
 - Most committees stock all the literature that is available in the Special Needs catalog.
 - Some groups decide to provide AA stories on audiocassette or in American Sign Language on videotape.
 - Work in cooperation with their local district CPC, CCF, CTF and PI Committees.
 - Circulate flyers that list the available material, location, time open, and contact person to all groups in the area.
 - District loan library:
 - Committees have requested groups, service committees including literature committee and individual AA members to donate funding or AA literature, audiotapes, and videotapes to start a loan library. Some committees have held fundraisers.

- Some Committees have set up the library at the most accessible location within their AA district. (i.e. AA Clubhouse or one of the meeting locations that offers several meetings per week).
- Central service offices/intergroups loan libraries have worked well for some districts and areas.
- Some areas have had an area traveling loan library set up at area quarterly assemblies. Service members check out materials for a 3-month period of time. To be returned by the following assembly.
- Local City Library: Some committees have requested the local city library to stock AA literature including but not limited to the following: AA literature, audiocassettes, and videotapes available in the Special Needs catalog. AA Big Book & Twelve Step and Twelve Traditions book in the primary languages used in that area, including American Sign Language (video tapes) and Braille.
 - Inform the local PI, CPC, CTF, and CCF Committees of what is available through the local library.
- Shift workers: Some Committees assist AA members in starting new meetings at a time that will work for them.
- Parents of young children:
 - Childcare support:
 - Assist groups in setting up meetings to provide childcare, with the group paying a child care provider.
 - Assist groups in starting a nursery near the meeting room, with members of the group rotating childcare responsibilities during the meeting. Sometimes a split shift of volunteers during the meeting is established so all members get to participate in the AA the meeting.
 - Volunteer list signup sheet for parents interested in rotating childcare and meeting nights with other parents.
 - Volunteer list sign up sheet for AA members interested in volunteering to provide childcare for specific meeting times.
 - Post meetings that have child care in the meeting schedules.

- Elderly:
 - Assist AA members in starting regular AA meetings at senior citizens centers, nursing homes, and foster care homes.
 - Inform the senior citizens community about accessible AA meetings.
 - Senior citizens centers/newsletters
 - Local newspaper
 - Local library/newsletters
 - Meals-on-wheels
 - Nursing homes, foster homes, and hospital bulletin boards
 - Church bulletin boards

❖ **Access for AA members who are Deaf and whose primary language is American Sign Language:**

- The information below lists what some committees have done to provide access. Some of this information can also apply to deafened and Hard of Hearing members who use sign language.
- Anonymity in the Deaf community is difficult to maintain. Ask the Deaf person's permission before using even their first name when communicating with anyone about them.
 - Provide communication tips to AA members who are not familiar with communicating with people who are ASL users/culturally Deaf.
 - There is a cultural as well as language difference in the Deaf community. What is appropriate to a Deaf person is not always appropriate to a hearing person, and vice versa.
 - Volunteer signup sheet: (refer to page 7)
 - Training AA members on employing and using professional interpreters.
 - Keep paper and pencils easily available at meetings as a communication aid.
 - Request closed meetings to take a group conscience to determine whether the group would welcome Deaf AA members with non-AA ASL interpreters. Post meeting codes to reflect group conscience in meeting schedules. (i.e.(SIW) non-AA sign language interpreter welcome (CSI) closed to non-AA sign language interpreters). Sample flyer on page 39-40

- Visit and assess compliance at all meetings currently posted as accessible. Update meeting codes with the accurate code/symbol for their access needs. (refer to page 26-27)
- Literature for Deaf alcoholics: American Sign Language (ASL) is a not a written language. It is a complete, natural, visual language, independent of English, with its own set of grammatical rules and syntax. It is not a coded form of English. ASL is a conceptual, visually spatial language with no direct word-for-word translation to English. Thus, knowledge about Alcoholics Anonymous is not communicated very well to the Deaf community, especially through written English.
 - The "only" AA literature available in ASL from the General Service Office:
 - (VS-1) Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book (**First 164 pages only**) in ASL (Videotape set \$38.00)
 - (VS-3) Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in ASL (Videotape set \$35.00)
 - Some committee's are requesting GSO to translate the 4th Edition of the Big Book into ASL on videotape.
 - In some cases the committees will give a set of the Big Book/ Twelve Steps and Traditions ASL videotapes to an AA member who is Deaf. The ASL videotapes cost about six times the cost of the hard copy Big Book in English.
 - **For many AA members the key to their sobriety is having the opportunity to hear other AA members share their experience, strength, and hope. Alcoholics who are Deaf have no access to the Big Book AA stories and find very limited access to AA meetings, thus makes it difficult for them to learn how others members of AA stay sober.**
- Some Access Committees have had AA stories translated in American Sign Language (video tape) and make them available for loan.
- Some of the areas/districts that have had a lot of experience with making meetings accessible for Deaf AA members find it is best to schedule the interpreted meetings on a month-to-month request basis only.
- Rides to interpreted meetings: (volunteer signup sheet)
 - Provide public transportation information available.

- AA meetings by phone: Training AA members how to use the state relay service. Volunteer list signup sheet for people willing to help set up phone conference call meetings, especially for those without computers.
 - **AA Guidelines MG-16:**
 - Some intergroup/central offices have TTY (Teletypewriter or Text Telephone) machines to enable the deaf member to readily contact the AA community. Those who do not have them use the Telecommunications Relay Service, which is offered in most communities. Either way, there should be some training in the use of this equipment so that the communication will be as smooth as possible for all concerned. They might also keep a list of deaf or hard of hearing AA members who have TTY machines and would like to network with members.
 - If a Deaf member comes to your group, put them in touch with someone who is willing to keep in touch through TTY or Relay Service.
- Training AA members to use the internet for AA meetings: (refer to page 7)
 - Some Committees are working to develop AA online interpreted meetings. (video interpretation)
- AA meeting in print:(refer to page 7-8)
- Loan Library: (refer to page 8)
- Local City Library: (refer to page 9)
- Inform the Deaf community about accessible AA meetings.
 - **AA Guidelines MG-13:** Based on the response GSO received from the professional agencies we contacted, we encourage local PI and CPC committees to contact agencies for the deaf...to let them know about AA resources for the deaf.
 - National Association for the Deaf
 - State Association for the Deaf
 - State Deaf School
 - Deaf clubs
 - Association of Late-deafened Adults (ALDA)
 - Self Help for Hard of Hearing (SHHH)
 - Local library/newsletters
 - Local newspaper
 - Colleges that provide Deaf education programs
 - Colleges that have Sign Language Interpreting Programs

- Scheduling of interpreters for AA meetings, business meeting, events and conferences.
 - **AA Guidelines MG-13:**
 - AA Events and Conferences: Reserve interpreters well ahead of the time because they are in great demand.
 - Budget the interpreting expenses.
 - In designating preferred seating for deaf members, cordon off the reserved area and clearly indicate "Please reserve for deaf members," and ask that people refrain from walking in front of the section as it will cause the deaf members to be cut off from the speaker and the interpreter.
 - Sensitize workshop leaders and meeting chairpersons to the use of interpreters. In this way, those members who depend on the interpreter will not be deprived of opening remarks or keynote speakers.
 - Stick with your plans once you have announced that the event will be interpreted. Deaf people are very likely to travel far for a few events that are interpreted.
 - If your listing the event...specify that it is sign language interpreted. If possible, have a TTY number that deaf people can call for more information.
 - Educate the meeting chairperson and AA members speaking/reading at the meeting or event.
 - **AA Guidelines MG 13:** If you are called to read something while an interpreter is signing, read slowly and clearly. Try to furnish the interpreter with the text beforehand, as formal writing is more difficult to interpret quickly.
 - Be sensitive to the lag time between translating spoken English to American Sign Language. Be aware that the AA members depending on the interpreter for translation will be a few seconds behind in getting the information.
 - Most professional interpreters will communicate to the person who is speaking to slow down if they are speaking/ reading too fast. If this happens we encourage AA members to be respectful to their request. They are professional workers who are employed to give a full translation of what is happening at the meeting.

❖ **Employing special workers:**

- **Tradition Eight: "Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers."**
 - **Since our primary purpose is to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers and our common welfare depends on AA unity,** it is clear, within our AA traditions, to request our service centers; district, intergroups, and central service offices to employ special workers to make the program of AA available to Deaf alcoholics.
 - **"Whenever anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I Am Responsible."** Bill W. co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous (at the 1965 International Convention in Toronto, Canada)
- **Tradition Nine: "AA as such ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."** Aim of our services it to bring sobriety within reach of all who want it. (page 12 of the 12 by 12)
 - **The service boards: districts, intergroups, and central service offices are created TO HELP AND DIRECTLY BE RESPONSIBLE TO the groups they serve.**
 - **Our AA members, groups, districts, donate funding to support these service boards.**
 - **The monies can be used for Tradition Eight**
- **Tradition One: "Our common welfare should come first: personal recovery depends on AA unity." Without unity, AA dies. Individual liberty, yet great unity. Key to paradox: each AA's life depends on obedience to spiritual principles. The group must survive or the individual will not. Common welfare comes first. How best to live and work together as groups.** (page 9 of the 12 by 12)
 - Some groups have found the expense of employing a special worker too great. Some groups do not want Deaf alcoholics at the meeting because they **fear** the group will not survive if they employ a special worker.
 - This tradition is listed as what should come first – **"AA unity"**. We need **unity** from groups, district, intergroups, and central service offices to make the AA program available to Deaf alcoholics that want it.

- **Tradition Three: "The only requirement for AA is a desire to stop drinking." Early intolerance based on fear. To take away any alcoholic's chance at AA was sometimes to pronounce his death sentence. Membership regulations abandoned. Any alcoholic is a member of AA when he says so. (page 10 of the 12 by 12)**
- **Tradition Four: "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole."**
 - The need to employ special workers is a need for AA as a whole in each district and area. This professional service is vital in order to give Deaf alcoholics the opportunity to participate in the program of Alcoholic's Anonymous.
- **Tradition Five: "Each group has but one primary purpose-to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." Better do one thing well than many badly. The life of our Fellowship depends on this principle. The ability of each AA to identify himself with and bring recovery to the newcomer is a gift from God...passing on this gift to others is our one aim. Sobriety can't be kept unless it is given away. (page 11 of the 12 by 12)**
- **NEW SERVICE PIECE RELEASED APRIL 2001:** "Serving the Alcoholic with Special Needs" (F-107): Special Needs Committees and local service offices maintain lists of qualified interpreters who are willing and able to sign for AA meetings and events. Providing a signer takes money, and if the group cannot afford the cost, there are sources for help. Some local intergroups/central offices provide resources in their annual budgets for helping to hire interpreters, and some area committees have set up special funds. Also, the alcoholic may bring his or her own interpreter to a meeting.
- **AA Guidelines MG-16:** For members who are deaf or hard of hearing, the use of a skilled interpreter in American Sign Language (ASL) is encouraged. The Special Needs Committee can compile and maintain a list of meetings where ASL interpreters are available, as well as a list of ASL interpreters willing and able to sign at AA functions. The cost of ASL interpreters is a factor for many groups. In some areas the intergroup or district committees provide financial assistance and/or help coordinate efforts to make signed meetings available.

- **AA Guidelines MG-13:** Qualified interpreters are professional people who charge fees for their services.
- **AA Guidelines MG-16:** Professional ASL (American Sign Language) interpreters adhere to a strict code of ethics, which assures the confidentiality of the AA meeting.
- **AA Guidelines MG-13:** Professional interpreters who are also AA members sometimes are willing to volunteer their services.
- **AA Guidelines MG-13:** Be careful of placing too much reliance on volunteers....
 - Knowing American Sign Language is not the same as being able to interpret.
- Intergroup/central service offices: Some Committee's have worked with intergroups/central service offices to provide interpreted meetings on a request basis from Deaf AA members.
 - The intergroups/central service offices process billing invoices directly from the interpreters.
 - Some intergroups/central service offices budget quarterly and provide the number of interpreted meetings they have funding for on a request only basis.
 - Some areas have an AA volunteer that takes care of scheduling interpreters/meeting month-to-month to meet the needs of the deaf AA members who attend.
 - Some intergroups/central services offices pay the interpreting expense for special events or functions.
- District: Some District Access Committees have started an interpreting fund within the district budget and request all groups in the district to donate funds to help provide interpreted meetings in their district.
 - Some districts budget the funds to include a set amount per hour to pay interpreters.
 - Some districts leave the scheduling/hiring of interpreters up to the deaf members themselves with the interpreter billing the district.
 - Sometimes the large AA groups will pay the total expense of the interpreter.
 - Some groups that have ASL interpreters pass a basket for the interpreter expense and then the district-Access covers the rest of the cost.

- Access Committee budgets for interpreting expense:
 - **AA Guidelines MG-13:** ...Experience shared with GSO indicates that numerous areas have formed Accessibility Needs Committees and this experience seems to indicate that these committees can be a partial solution to funding the cost of signers. Groups are encouraged to contribute and designate funds for these committees.
- Some areas use a combination of funding resources to provide interpreted meetings: Intergroup/central service office, district, and groups.
 - Sometimes an outside agency may cover the interpreting expense. In some counties the interpreters are paid through outside agency as a result of the deaf person who is attending. For example if that person received a DUII and the court has ordered them to attend AA meetings as a part of the diversion program. Some deaf alcoholics receiving outpatient treatment will attend AA meetings and the treatment facility paying the interpreting expense.
 - How do we stay within our AA Traditions? The deaf AA member or agency takes care of the arrangements. The interpreters are paid directly from the agency. None of the funding goes to or through AA.

- ❖ **Access for AA members who are Hard of Hearing:** The information below lists what some committees have done to provide access.
 - Provide communication tips to AA members who are not familiar with communicating with people who are hard of hearing.
 - Volunteer signup sheet: (refer to page 7)
 - Training AA members to use Assistive Listening Devices (ALD) at AA meetings.
 - Sample flyer on page 41
 - Keep paper and pencils easily available at your meeting as a communication aid.
 - Visit and assess compliance at all meetings currently posted as accessible. Update meeting codes with the accurate code/symbol for their access needs. (refer to page 26-27)
 - Rides to meetings that have ALD: (volunteer signup sheet)
 - Provide public transportation information.
 - AA meetings by phone: Training AA members to use the state phone relay service. Volunteer list signup sheet for people willing to help set up phone conference call meetings, especially for those without computers.
 - Training AA members to use the internet for AA meetings: (refer to page 7)
 - AA meeting in print: (refer to page 7-8)
 - Loan Library: (refer to page 8)
 - Local City Library: (refer to page 9)
 - Inform the Hard of Hearing community about accessible AA meetings.
 - Local chapter for Self Help for Hard of Hearing (SHHH)
 - Audiologist offices
 - Hearing aid service providers
 - Local library/newsletters
 - Local paper
 - Senior citizens centers/newsletters
 - Church bulletin boards

- ❖ **Access for AA members who are oral deaf or late-deafened:** The information below lists what some committees have done to provide access.
 - Provide communication tips to AA members who are not familiar with communicating with people who are deafened.
 - Volunteer signup sheet: (refer to page 7)
 - Training AA members to:
 - Arrange for real-time captioning also known as Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART)
 - Employ professional oral interpreters
 - Arrange for computer-assisted note taking (Some Committees have experimented with using computer-assisted note taking and have found it helpful for deafened alcoholics).
 - Some Committees have experimented with using computer voice recognition software, but technology has not advanced far enough to make this a helpful tool for AA meetings at this time. It has been helpful for one on one AA meeting.
 - Keep paper and pencils easily available at your meeting as a communication aid.
 - Visit and assess compliance at all meetings currently posted as accessible. Update meeting codes with the accurate code/symbol for their access needs. (refer to page 26-27)
 - Rides to meetings that are accessible for them: (volunteer signup sheet)
 - Provide public transportation information.
 - AA meetings by phone: Training AA members to use the state phone relay service. Volunteer list signup sheet for people willing to help set up phone conference call meetings, especially for those without computers.
 - Training AA members to use the internet for AA meetings: (refer to page 7)
 - AA meeting in print: (refer to page 7-8)
 - Loan Library: (refer to page 8)
 - Local City Library: (refer to page 9)
 - Inform the Deafened Community about accessible AA meetings.
 - Association of Late-deafened Adults (ALDA)
 - Oral deaf Associations
 - Local library/newsletters
 - Local newspaper
 - Senior citizens centers/newsletters

- ❖ **Access for AA members whose primary language is not English or English speaking AA members who have limited English reading and writing skills.** The information below lists what some committees have done to provide access.
 - Provide literature from GSO in the various languages as requested.
 - Easy to read literature from the Special Needs catalog.
 - Provide communication tips for AA members not familiar with communicating with AA members from other cultures.
 - Provide meeting list in the their primary language (i.e. Spanish).
 - Volunteer signup sheet: (refer to page 7)
 - Request volunteers that know a second language to be temporary sponsors.
 - Volunteers to read/translate AA literature to them.
 - Clearly post AA meetings that are conducted in other languages (i.e. Spanish & American Sign Language).
 - Rides to meetings that are accessible to them: (volunteer signup sheet)
 - Provide public transportation information.
 - AA meetings by phone: Volunteer list signup sheet for people willing to help set up phone conference call meetings, especially for those without computers.
 - Training AA members to use the internet for AA meetings: (refer to page 7)
 - AA meeting in print: (refer to page 7-8)
 - AA meeting on tape: (refer to page 8)
 - Loan Library: (refer to page 8)
 - Local City Library: (refer to page 9)
 - Inform Spanish and other cultural communities in your area about accessible AA meetings.
 - Spanish/Deaf and other cultural community service providers
 - Spanish news resources
 - Local library/newsletters
 - Local newspaper

- ❖ **Access for AA members who have a speech disability:** The information below lists what some committees have done to provide access.
 - Provide communication tips to AA members not familiar with communicating with people who have a speech disability.
 - Volunteer signup sheet: (refer to page 7)
 - Use of a lap top computer at the AA meeting can be helpful for people who have a speech disability. They will type what they want to share at the meeting and a volunteer will voice for them. Some AA member's who are speech disabled also have mobility loss and are unable to type on the computer. An assistant that is familiar with that individual may attend the meeting with them to voice interpret.
 - Keep paper and pencils easily available at your meeting as a communication aid.
 - Rides to meetings that are accessible for them: (volunteer signup sheet)
 - Provide public transportation information.
 - AA meetings by phone: Training AA members to use the state phone relay service. Volunteer list signup sheet for people willing to help set up phone conference call meetings, especially for those without computers.
 - Training AA members to use the internet for AA meetings: (refer to page 7)
 - AA meeting in print: (refer to page 7-8)
 - AA meeting on tape: (refer to page 8)
 - Loan Library: (refer to page 8)
 - Local City Library: (refer to page 9)
 - Inform agencies that provide services for people with speech disabilities about accessible AA meetings.
 - Local library/newsletters
 - Local newspaper






- ❖ **Access for AA member who are blind or have low vision:** The information below lists what some committees have done to provide access.
- Provide communication tips to AA members not familiar with communicating with people who are blind
 - Meeting schedule available in Braille
 - Volunteer signup sheet: (refer to page 7)
 - Volunteers read AA literature to them. (volunteer signup sheet)
 - Visit and assess compliance at all meetings currently posted as accessible. Update meeting codes with the accurate code/symbol for their access needs. (refer to page 26-27)
 - Rides to meetings: (volunteer signup sheet)
 - Meeting brought to them: (volunteer signup sheet)
 - Training AA members to use the internet for AA meetings: (refer to page 7)
 - AA meeting in print: (refer to page 7-8)
 - AA meeting on tape: (refer to page 8)
 - Loan Library: (refer to page 8)
 - Local City Library: (refer to page 9)
 - Inform agencies that provide services for people who are blind about accessible AA meetings.

- ❖ **Access for AA members who have had head injuries & AA members who are dual diagnosed** (i.e. alcoholism and acute/chronic illness or alcoholism and mental illness): The information below lists what some committees have done to provide access.
 - Provide literature to fit their needs from GSO.
 - Provide communication tips to AA members not familiar with communicating with people who have had head injuries or are dual diagnosed.
 - Volunteer signup sheet: (refer to page 7)
 - Volunteers read AA literature to them. (volunteer signup sheet)
 - Rides to meetings: (volunteer signup sheet)
 - Meeting brought to them: (volunteer signup sheet)
 - Training AA members to use the internet for AA meetings: (refer to page 7)
 - AA meeting in print: (refer to page 7-8)
 - AA meeting on tape: (refer to page 8)
 - Loan Library: (refer to page 8)
 - Local City Library: (refer to page 9)
 - Inform agencies that provide services for people with head injuries.
 - Local library/newsletters
 - Local newspaper

- ❖ **Access for AA members who have a mobility loss or use a wheelchair:** The information below lists what some committees have done to provide access.
 - Provide communication tips to AA members not familiar with communicating with people who use wheelchairs.
 - Volunteer signup sheet: (refer to page 7)
 - Visit and assess compliance at all meetings currently posted as accessible. Update meeting codes with the accurate code/symbol for their access needs. (refer to page 26-27)
 - Sample flyer on page 42-43
 - Rides to meetings: (Volunteer signup sheet)
 - Meeting brought to them: (Volunteer signup sheet)
 - Training AA members to use the internet for AA meetings: (refer to page 7)
 - AA meeting in print: (refer to page 7-8)
 - AA meeting on tape: (refer to page 8)
 - Loan Library: (refer to page 8)
 - Local City Library: (refer to page 9)
 - Inform agencies that provide services for people who have mobility loss about accessible AA meetings.
 - Local library/newsletters
 - Local newspaper

- ❖ **Open meetings and the ADA:** This topic has come up for some Access Committees. How this topic is addressed varies between Committees. The below information is a brief description of how some have addressed the topic:
 - AA groups/meetings open to the general public and using facilities that are open to the general public attempt to follow the American Disabilities Act law.
 - Many of the facilities we rent from are already set up for access for people who have mobility loss or use wheelchairs, people who are hard of hearing, and people who are blind or have low vision.
 - The AA group contacts the facility engineer/maintenance person or the audiovisual department to find out if the facility is accessible.
 - ◆ Wheelchair accessible parking, facility, and restroom for people with mobility loss
 - ◆ Assistive Listening Devices (ALD) for people who are hard of hearing.
 - ◆ Braille signage for people who are blind
 - Post how the meeting is accessible in the meeting schedules. (refer to page 26-27)
 - The public facilities we rent are not responsible for providing sign language interpreters. That is the responsibility of the people who rent the rooms.
 - Open AA groups often attempt to provide interpreters upon request with the help of the district, and intergroup/central service office.
 - AA meetings taken into jails, mental hospitals, and treatment centers
 - The institution is responsible to provide access to the facility and all services provided to their clients. If an AA meeting is brought into their facility they are required to provide access to that meeting for any disabled clients wishing to attend. Including employing certified interpreters for deaf clients who want to attend the AA meeting.

❖ **Meeting codes, symbols, and signage:**

- Some Access Committees are requesting the groups to update meeting codes to provide clear information about how or if the meeting is accessible.
 - Visit and assess compliance at all meetings currently posted as accessible. Update meeting codes with the appropriate code and symbol.
 - Some areas use the handicapped or disabled term to encompass all access needs. This has made it confusing to groups that rely on symbols/signage to explain a variety of access types actually available.
- Examples of meeting codes being adapted for use in some areas:
 - Meeting code used for closed meetings/groups to show group conscience has been taken to welcome Deaf alcoholics.
 - Refer to sample flyer on page 37
 - 
 - (SI) Sign interpreted
 - 
 - (ALD's) Assistive Listening Devices *for the Hard of Hearing*
 - 
 - (WA-PFR) Wheelchair Accessible **P**arking/**F**acility/**R**estroom
 - 
 - (SB) Signage Braille
 - 
 - (RTC) Real-time Captioning / CART
 - (ASL) meeting conducted in American Sign Language
 - National accessibility symbols and signage some Committees are requesting groups to use are listed on pages 43-46

- Some areas are working with AA webmasters and printed meeting schedulers to make the events that are accessible easier to find. Some printed meeting schedules and websites now have a section dedicated to listing accessible AA meetings. Some websites have a link for (Deaf/HoH) Accessible meetings for Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
 - Some areas have an interpreted meeting coordinator who maintains a listing of interpreted meetings on a month-to-month basis. Sometimes these listings are posted on websites to make the information more accessible for Deaf AA members, especially newcomers (i.e. Accessible AA meetings for Deaf/HoH).
 - Some areas add the website address in the regular hard copy meeting schedule. Since the monthly accessible meetings calendar tends to be updated more often than printed schedules. This helps provide more current information about which meetings are being interpreted.
 - Access Committees have found it important to get the correct information out in a timely manner. Deaf alcoholics sometimes drive for miles to attend an interpreted AA meeting only to find the meeting is no longer interpreted.

❖ **Access presentations, workshops, and booths displays:**

- Provide access information, resources and contact information for the Access Committee
- Some committees provide Access information packets that may include the following:
 - AA Guidelines MG-13 & MG-16
 - Copies of access need articles published in Box 459 and the Grapevine.
 - Literature from the General Service Office Special Needs catalog and Spanish catalog
 - District access survey: Sample on page 34
 - Group access checklist handout: Sample on page 35
 - Closed meeting flyer: Sample on page 36
 - Accessible meetings for AA member with mobility loss flyer: Sample on page 37
 - Loan library information
 - Information on how to employ certified interpreters.
 - Code of ethics: Certified interpreters follow a code of ethics. This means they must keep confidentiality.
 - Team interpreting information.
 - Provide flyer explaining Assistive Listening Devices and how to post it as accessible in the meeting schedule: Sample on page 38
 - Information on how to employ a real-time captioning person.
 - Some provide handouts listing the state relay service number and how to use relay for deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing, Spanish speaking, and speech disabled.
 - VCO-voice carry over used by late-deafened and hard of hearing
 - HCO-hearing carry over use by people who's speech is difficult to understand but they are able to hear
 - Spanish relay service
 - Communication tips
 - Treatment center resources that provide access

- Some committees use the following to display or have demonstrations:
 - TV and VCR to play AA videotapes
 - Cassette layer and headphones to play AA auto tapes
 - Computer: If internet access is available on site some demonstrate how to access AA related websites, online AA meetings.
 - Some demonstrate how the computer can assist deafened and speech disabled AA members at meetings.
 - Assistive Listening Devices for the Hard of Hearing: Demonstrate how personal or groups ALD's work and how to use them at an AA meeting.
 - TTY/TDD – Text Telephone: Demonstrate how to use a text telephone and how to use the state phone relay service.

❖ **Biggest challenge for Access Committees:**

- Having enough AA members to volunteer for access service work

❖ **Access Information Resources**

- **Literature:** What is the difference between service material and conference-approved literature?
 - Service material is produced when there is a need for readily available information on a specific subject. Service material reflects A.A. group experience, as well as specific and timely information that are subject to update or change. Service materials are reviewed for changes or updating when they come up for reprint.
 - Conference-approved literature comes through Conference Advisory Action. Conference-approved material deals with the recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous or with information about the A.A. Fellowship. It usually starts with an idea and goes through a lengthy and painstaking process, during which a Conference and trustees' committee members, A.A.s from all over the United States and Canada, read and express opinions throughout the process.
 - **Access pamphlet service piece:** At the 2000 General Service Conference the Conference Literature Committee "discussed the need for a pamphlet about special needs and suggested that a service piece, in pamphlet form be developed for use by special needs committees and other A.A. members interested in carrying the message to alcoholics with special needs." The suggestion from the Committee was to develop a service piece in pamphlet form. The Trustees Literature Committee asked the AAWS service committee to develop the special needs pamphlet. That has been done and new Access Service pamphlet "**may**" be released as soon as April 2001. The committee working on the service piece reviewed information that was submitted by Access Committees throughout the US/Canada including information sent by Oregon AC in July 2000. The Committee added what they felt was appropriate for the service pamphlet.

- **Access handbook:** Most workbook kits currently available from GSO for service committees are service material and not conference-approved material. Service pieces are much easier to update than conference approved literature. Workbooks produced by AAWS have come about as a need for them has developed throughout our entire structure. Currently, there has not been a need for an Access Handbook expressed "*throughout*" our structure. We encourage all areas to discuss the need for a handbook and process a formal request for that need so that GSO is aware of it. If there is enough of an expressed need "*throughout*" our structure it is possible that the AAWS will consider developing an Access handbook.
 - There are several states that believe there is a strong need for an Access Handbook and have recently starting working together to develop one. Handbooks provide more detailed "how to" information on the topic than a pamphlet. The handbook will be based on the experience shared by Access Committees in the US/Canada. When the handbook draft is completed the participating parties will confer to decide how they would like to present the handbook in their local areas.
- What some areas have done to provide Access information to their local areas.
 - Florida, Nevada, and California have all written Access pamphlets and use them in their local area.
- Information from GSO: The General Service Office (GSO) is the national office serving A.A. in the U.S./Canada. P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, New York 10163, (212) 870 3400. Special Needs Committee liaison specialneeds@aa.org
 - AA Guidelines:
 - (MG-13) "Carrying the Message to the Deaf alcoholic"
 - (MG-16) Serving Alcoholics with Special Needs
 - Special Needs Catalog: (F-10SN) AA Literature and Audiovisual Material for Special Needs.

- Grapevine Articles
 - February 2000
 - ◆ "Solutions Not Sadness"
 - ◆ "Where I'm Supposed to Be"
 - ◆ "The Long Haul"
 - ◆ "The Hand of AA"
 - July 2000 "New Century, Same Old A.A."
- Box 459 Articles
 - August-September 2000 Deaf Can 'Listen' to Fellow AA's on Videotape"
 - February-March 2000 A.A.s 'Share a Day' To Give Voice to Their Special Needs.
 - August-September 1998 "New Special Needs Catalog Is Part of Widespread Effort"
 - April-May 1997 "Special Needs Are High-Priority in Eastern Missouri"
 - February-March 1997 "How to Fix Your Meeting so that Everyone 'Hears'"
 - October-November 1996 "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in American Sign Language"
 - October-November 1995
 - ◆ "Meetings for the Hearing Impaired on the Rise in Chicago"
 - ◆ "Sharing Online Builds A.A. Bridges for the Hearing Impaired"
 - August-September 1995 "Giving the Homebound a Dose of A.A. Love"
 - February-March 1994
 - ◆ Helping the Deaf To 'Build Bridges Of Communication'
 - ◆ "International Deaf Group Meeting by Mail: Early Members Reminisce"
 - October-November 1991 "Making A.A. Accessible To the Alcoholic With Special Needs"
 - August-September 1987 "How Can We Help Handicapped A.A.s"

- February-March 1987
 - ◆ "More Literature in Spanish"
 - ◆ "Tape Exchange Network Benefits the Blind"
- Holiday 1985 "Dallas Group Meets Needs of Hearing-Impaired"
- February-March 1985 PI "Hearing-Impaired and non-English-Speaking Drunks Can Be Reached"
- August-September 1983
 - ◆ "Good News for Spanish-Speaking Loners and Seaman"
 - ◆ Deaf Carry Message To 'Listening Ears'
- April-May 1983
 - ◆ "Shut-Ins Turn Walls Into Windows"
 - ◆ "Twelfth-Stepping the Deaf"
- Holiday 1982
 - ◆ "How A.A. Is Reaching The Hearing Impaired"
 - ◆ "Spanish-Speaking A.A.s Report Rapid Progress"
- February-March 1982 "Deaf Group Flourishes"
- Order information: Write, E-mail, or call in orders: General Service Office, PO Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163, E-mail: orders@aa.org, Phone: Order Entry Department weekdays from 8:00 AM to 4:45 PM Eastern time: (212) 870-3312
- Internet Resources:
 - The GSO AA web site <http://www.aa.org/> created and maintained by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. ("The General Service Office" of U.S./Canada).
 - Online Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous <http://www.aa-intergroup.org>
- Key words for finding more information in the yellow pages of the phone book or searching the internet.
 - Deaf:
 - National Association for the Deaf
 - State Association for the Deaf I.E. Oregon Association for the Deaf
 - State school of the Deaf
 - Deaf culture
 - American Sign Language Interpreters

- Registry of interpreters for the Deaf
- Interpreter code of ethics
- Team interpreting
- Coordinating Interpreters For Conferences
- Deafened
- Oral Deaf:
 - Oral interpreters
 - Association of Late-deafened Adults (ALDA)
 - Real-time Captioning
 - Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART)
 - Stenographers
 - Voice recognition software
 - Computer Assisted Note taking (CAN)
- Hard of Hearing:
 - Self Help for Hard of Hearing (SHHH)
 - Assistive Listening Devices
- Blind:
 - Deaf blind
 - Braille
- Wheelchair access
- Head injury
- Speech disorders
- Phone: State Relay Services, I.E. Texas Relay Services
 - State Public Utilities Commission
- AA online meetings
- National disability signage and symbols
 - Disabled access symbols
 - Disabled access signage

District Access Survey

Area ___ District ___ Date: _____ Phone/e-mail: _____

- Has the district had any of the following access need requests over the last 5 years? How did the district provide access?
 - Access for AA members who are isolated. Yes/No
 - Access for AA members who are Deaf. Yes/No
 - Access for AA members who are Hard of Hearing. Yes/No
 - Access for AA members who are oral deaf or late-deafened. Yes/No
 - Access for AA members whose primary language is not English Yes/No
 - Access for AA members that have limited English reading and writing skills. Yes/No
 - Access for AA members who have a speech disability. Yes/No
 - Access for AA members who are blind or have low vision. Yes/No
 - Access for AA members who have had a head injury. Yes/No
 - Access for AA members who are dual diagnosed. Yes/No
 - Access for AA members who have mobility loss or use a wheelchair. Yes/No
 - Other: _____
- Does the district have an Access Chair person? Yes/No
- If not, which district committee member helps to address access needs?

- Would the district be willing to budget for an Access Committee? Yes/No
- Does the district have access need information available from GSO? Yes/No
- Does the district have a signup sheet for temporary sponsors who know Sign Language or Spanish? Yes/No
- Do the closed meetings in the district welcome Deaf alcoholics? Yes/No
- Does the district budget funds to employ special workers when needed? I.E. ASL interpreters? Yes/No

- ❑ If a Deaf alcoholic wants to attend AA meetings, what is the procedure the district goes through to set up a sign language interpreted meeting for that person?
- ❑ Do any of the AA meetings, business meetings or special events use facilities that have Assistive Listening Devices for the Hard of Hearing? Yes/No
 - Are the district members familiar with what ALD are? Yes/No
- ❑ Do any of the groups, business meetings or special events use Real-time captioning (RTC)? Yes/No
- ❑ Are any of the AA meetings, business meetings or special events accessible for AA members with mobility loss? Yes/No
 - Are the facility, restroom, parking lot, meeting room, and entry door being used accessible? Yes/No
- ❑ Do any of the groups, business meetings or special events use facilities that have Braille signage? Yes/No
- ❑ Does the district Literature Committee stock the literature from the Special Needs catalog? Yes/No
- ❑ What meeting codes are used to show access?
- ❑ How do you inform the public about accessible AA meetings?
- ❑ Are the accessible meetings easy to find in the meeting directory on your web site or printed copy? Yes/No

AA Group Access Check List

Date: ___ GSR: _____ Phone/e-mail: _____

- Does the district have a website? Yes/No _____
- Are the group members familiar with Assistive Listening Devices (ALD) and how to find out if the facility has them? Yes/No
- If a Deaf alcoholic makes contact with someone in the group and requests attending the meeting, what is the procedure the group would follow to arrange for a sign language interpreter. Use backside of paper.
- Would the group be willing to pass a second AA basket to donate funds to the district for Access needs? Yes/No
- Does the group or district have the following AA literature available?
 - AA literature available in American Sign Language
 - AA closed captioned videotape
 - AA literature available on auto cassettes, in Braille and large print
 - Easy to read AA literature
- Is the meeting accessible for AA members with mobility loss? Yes/No
- Is the facility wheelchair accessible?
 - Is the meeting or conference room wheelchair accessible? Yes/No
 - Is the restroom wheelchair accessible? Yes/No
 - Is the parking wheelchair accessible? Yes/No
 - Is there wheelchair accessible seating? Yes/No
 - Is the entry door used for the meeting wheelchair accessible? Yes/No
 - Is the access information posted in the meeting schedule? Yes/No
- Does the facility have Braille Signage? Yes/No
 - If so is it posted in the meeting schedule? Yes/No
- Does the group have a sign up sheet for service work volunteers? Yes/ o
 - To give rides to the meeting? Yes/No
 - To provide childcare during the meeting time? Yes/No
 - To take AA meetings to members of the group when they become house/hospital bound? Yes/No

- To assistant AA members who are blind? Yes/No
- List of temporary sponsors who know Spanish or ASL? Yes/No
 - AA members do not have to know ASL or Spanish to sponsor a new comer that is Deaf or Spanish. It is often very beneficial to have a temporary sponsor to go to meetings with, especially if the person needs to drive to another city to attend an interpreted/ASL/Spanish meeting.
 - To AA members who have sign language skills >>> attend the interpreted/ASL meetings. Help carry the message to AA members that are Deaf.

Access to closed AA meetings for members who need an interpreter

To: District Committee Members & General Service Representatives

From: Access Committee

Subject: Non-AA professional interpreters at closed meetings

REQUEST:

- ❑ Request all closed groups to take a group conscience to see if their group is willing to allow a non-AA certified/professional interpreter for Deaf AA members to attend their closed meetings. Note: This does NOT mean that the group would be responsible to pay the interpreter.
- ❑ Share information from the GSO "Serving the Alcoholics with Special/Access Needs" service piece (F-107), AA Guidelines MG-13 "Carrying the Message to the Deaf Alcoholic" and MG-16 "Serving Alcoholics With Special Needs".
- ❑ Inform the group of the interpreter code of ethics.
- ❑ Add one of the meeting codes below:
 - (SIW) non-AA sign language interpreters welcome
 - (CSI) closed to non-AA sign language
- ❑ Inform the Access Committee, DCM, Webmaster, and meeting schedule person. _____

Intent/Purpose:

To get the pre-approval process taken care of and to make it clear in the schedule what the group conscience is for each closed meeting.

It is often very difficult for the Deaf alcoholic to attend a closed AA meeting. While a Deaf member may prefer to go to a closed meeting to better discuss their alcohol problem, the issue of whether the group will allow a non-AA professional interpreter to attend must be addressed. If a Deaf member "just shows up" with their interpreter at a closed meeting and asks the group if they can attend-it can be very awkward while the group takes a group conscience. In some cases there are objections to the interpreter being there, and even if the group conscience votes to have the Deaf member stay with their interpreter, the feeling is NOT at all one of being welcomed. If the group votes 'no', it's even worse! Once again, the Deaf alcoholic encounters a unique problem that most people in AA have never even thought of.

A suggested solution for this particular problem is to inform the groups of this dilemma, and ask groups who hold closed meetings to take a group conscience on whether or not they will allow a non-AA professional interpreter at their meeting. In this way we can build a list of closed meetings where Deaf alcoholics and their interpreters can attend without seeking special permission in advance.

RID's Code of Ethics

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. has set forth the following principles of ethical behavior to protect and guide interpreters and transliterators and hearing and deaf consumers. Underlying these principles is the desire to ensure for all the right to communicate.

- ❑ This Code of Ethics applies to all members of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. and to all certified non-members.
- ❑ **Interpreters/translitterators shall keep all assignment-related information strictly confidential.**
- ❑ Interpreters/translitterators shall render the message faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the speaker using language most readily understood by the person(s) whom they serve.
- ❑ Interpreters/translitterators shall not counsel, advise or interject personal opinions.
- ❑ Interpreters/translitterators shall accept assignments using discretion with regard to skill, setting, and the consumers involved.
- ❑ Interpreters/translitterators shall request compensation for services in a professional and judicious manner.
- ❑ Interpreters/translitterators shall function in a manner appropriate to the situation.
- ❑ Interpreters/translitterators shall strive to further knowledge and skills through participation in work-shops, professional meetings, interaction with professional colleagues, and reading of current literature in the field.
- ❑ Interpreters/translitterators, by virtue of membership or certification by the RID, Inc., shall strive to maintain high professional standards in compliance with the Code of Ethics.

NAD Interpreters Code of Ethics

- ❑ **All information in any interpreting assignment is to be kept in strictest confidence.**
- ❑ Interpreting services shall always be competent, impartial and professional.
- ❑ Messages shall be rendered faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the communicator, and professional judgement should be exercised in assessing whether communication is being understood.
- ❑ In accepting assignments, discretion based on skill, setting, and the consumers involved must be used.
- ❑ Counseling or interjecting personal opinion is never permitted.
- ❑ Information on the role and appropriate use of interpreting services shall be provided to the consumers when necessary.
- ❑ Information on available resources as appropriate should be provided.
- ❑ Compensation for services should be pursued in a professional manner.
- ❑ Respect of and for the deaf person's rights must always be evident.
- ❑ Only the highest professional standards, as promulgated by the NAD, shall be pursued.

Access for AA members who are Hard of Hearing

Assistive Listening Devices (ALD)

What are ALD? Assistive Listening Devices are amplification systems designed specifically to help people hear well in a variety of difficult listening situations. ALD can be used with a personal hearing aid or by themselves to help overcome background noises and being too far from the sound source. The basic function of an ALD is to improve "signal to noise ratio" for the listener. This means that sounds (signal) are amplified, and undesirable sounds (noise) are minimized. ALD can be used in many listening situations. They can be used to enhance sound in large public facilities or in-group situations. There are several types of ALD: Personal Amplified Systems, Infrared Systems, FM Systems and Loop Systems.

Does your meeting facility have ALD? The easiest way to determine if your meeting facility has ALD is by watching for the symbol:



(ALD) Assistive Listening Devices For the Hard of Hearing

This symbol indicates that the facility is equipped with ALD system. The second easiest way is to contact the audiovisual or maintenance department responsible for your facility, they will often be the most informed on the status of an ALD system if one exists since they are most often responsible for insuring it is operational and functional. If all else fails contact the administration of the facility you utilize.

Can your AA meeting be accessible for the Hard of Hearing?

Many public buildings and facilities now have ALD available. There is no cost to use the ALD's. It just takes some service work to find out if your meeting facility has them and turning on the system before each meeting.

If your facility is equipped with ALD your group might wish to consider using them and publicizing that your group has them to provide access for Hard of Hearing AA members.

If you're starting a new meeting, especially a speaker meeting, you might want to consider selecting a facility that is equipped with ALD.

If you are planning a convention or quarterly business assembly try to pick a facility that has an ALD system available already in place.

Access for AA members who have mobility loss or use wheelchairs

Is your AA meeting accessible to AA members who have mobility loss or use wheelchairs? Many of the facilities we rent for meetings are accessible to people who use wheelchairs. Once the group confirms that the parking, facility, and restroom are wheelchair accessible, you could post it in the meeting schedule. When possible note wheelchair accessibility by using the universal symbol, which indicates access for people with limited mobility.



(WA-PFR) Wheelchair Accessible **P**arking/**F**acility/**R**estroom

Example: If only the parking and facility entry door is accessible then use (WA-PF)

Sometimes the easiest way for the group to find out if the meeting is accessible is to do a walk/wheel through. Use a yardstick or a wheelchair to measure the parking lot and enter the building to measure the restrooms. The wheelchair access door may differ in location from the entry door currently posted in the schedule. Make changes to schedule if necessary.

Please update the groups meeting codes to clearly show the extent of accessibility. Here are the scenarios that AA members who use wheelchairs have had:

- They go to the meeting that is marked with something like H-handicapped. When they arrive they find that the parking lot is all gravel and does not have a wheel chair accessible parking space. Moving a wheelchair through gravel is very difficult.
- They may need to use the restroom and find that it is not accessible.
- The meeting is held in a room that is only accessible by stairway. So even though the facility, restroom, and parking are all accessible the meeting room itself is not.

- ❑ The parking, facility, and restroom are all accessible, but the meeting is held at a time of day where only the closest door to the meeting room is opened. The AA member who uses a wheelchair can't get to the meeting because the entry door that is being used by the group is not accessible.
- ❑ They see the meeting code H-handicapped in the schedule but when they arrive they find that meeting used that code because they have an interpreter for deaf AA members. The meeting was not accessible for people in who use wheelchairs.

So in regards to number 3 and 4, the group would need to either remove the listing as accessible or make changes that would actually make them accessible.

- ❑ Request a room that is wheelchair accessible.
- ❑ Be sure to clearly post which entry door is being used and use one that is accessible for a person in a wheelchair.

General Language and Communications Tips

Note that the positive phrases put the person first, the disability second

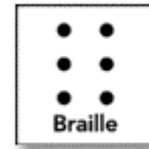
+ Positive Phrases - Negative Phrases

+ Person who used a wheelchair – handicapped

- ❑ If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
- ❑ Treat adults as adults. Address people by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others. (Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.)
- ❑ Leaning on or hanging on to a person's wheelchair is similar to leaning on hanging on to a person and is generally considered annoying. The chair is part of the personal body space of the person who uses it.
- ❑ Some AA members use powered wheelchairs not electric chairs. Electric chairs are what some of our states use to execute people.

Braille Symbol

This symbol indicates that printed matter is available in Braille, including exhibition labeling, publications and signage. File names: BRAILL-P.tif or BRAILL-N.tif



Access to Low Vision

This symbol may be used to indicate access for people who are blind or have low vision, including: a guided tour, a path to a nature trail or a scent garden in a park; and a tactile tour or a museum exhibition that may be touched. File names: WHTCNE-P.tif or WHTCNE-N.tif



Audio Description for TV, Video and Film

This service makes television, video, and film more accessible for persons who are blind or have low vision. Description of visual elements is provided by a trained Audio Descriptor through the Secondary Audio Program (SAP) of televisions and monitors equipped with stereo sound. An adapter for non-stereo TVs is available through the American Foundation for the Blind, (800)829-0500. File names: TVDESC-P.tif or TVDESC-N.tif



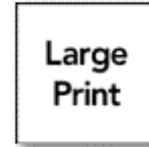
Live Audio Description

A service for people who are blind or have low vision that makes the performing and visual arts more accessible. A trained Audio Descriptor offers live commentary or narration (via headphones and a small transmitter) consisting of concise, objective descriptions of visual elements: for example, a theater performance or a visual arts exhibition at a museum. File names: LIVDES-P.tif or LIVDES-N.tif



Accessible Print

The symbol for large print is 'Large Print' printed in 18 Point or larger text. In addition to indicating that large print versions of books, pamphlets, museum guides and theater programs are available, you may use the symbol on conference or membership forms to indicate that print materials may be provided in large print. Sans serif or modified serif print with good contrast is highly recommended, and special attention should be paid to letter and word spacing. File names: LGPRNT-P.tif or LGPRNT-.tif



Sign Language Interpretation

The symbol indicates that Sign Language Interpretation is provided for a lecture, tour, performance, conference or other program. File names: SIGN-P.tif or SIGN-N.tif



Assistive Listening Devices / Systems

These systems transmit sound via hearing aids or head sets. They include infrared, loop and FM systems. Portable systems may be available from the same audiovisual equipment suppliers that service conferences and meetings. File names: LISTEN-P.tif or LISTEN-N.tif



Telephone Typewriter (TTY)

Also known as text telephone (TT), or telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), TTY indicates a telephone device used with the telephone (and the phone number) for communication between deaf, hard of hearing, speech-impaired and/or hearing persons. File names: TTY-P.tif or TTY-N.tif



Volume Control Telephone

This symbol indicates the location of telephones that have handsets with amplified sound and/or adjustable volume controls. File names: TELVOL-P.tif or TELVOL-N.tif



The Information Symbol

The most valuable commodity of today's society is information; to a person with a disability it is essential. For example, the symbol may be used on signage or on a floor plan to indicate the location of the information or security desk, where there is more specific information or materials concerning access accommodations and services such as "LARGE PRINT" materials, audio cassette recordings of materials, or sign interpreted tours. File names: INFO-P.tif or INFO-N.tif



Real-time Captioning also known as Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART)

Services may be performed either on-site or from a remote location via a modem. As words are spoken, the real-time captions appear on a screen (computer/TV monitor or projected), affording the deafened and hard of hearing access to any event. Captions can be displayed for one person, an entire room, or broadcast to multiple locales, and the text is readily available for later use.

How it works: Spoken language is recorded on computer-compatible court stenograph machine linked to an compatible computer by a machine shorthand reporter or steno typist. The computer is equipped with software that translates the steno writing into readable English text. The software maintains a customized stenographic dictionary that is updated by the captionist as new vocabulary is encountered. The text is stored in word processing files and is easily transferred to diskette, printed as notes, transmitted via e-mail, or incorporated into a database.



Set up tips: Provide the RTC with the meeting agenda and any terminology specific to AA. Use PC projector and large viewing screen placed in a position in which there is good visibility. It is sometimes helpful for the RTC to where an ALD to improve ability to hear what is being said. As with using any form of translation/interpreters there is lag time between what is spoken and what is translated/interpreted. It is best to **remind** the people who will be speaking to slow the pace down, take brief pauses, and when reading any formal written document to read slowly. Note: People read at a faster pace than normal speech.

The Promises

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations, which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. **They will always materialize if we work for them.**

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