

Greetings from our Cooperation with the Elder Community Committee -

A.A. Mid-Southern California Area 9

Because of all we've gone through this past year it has become glaringly apparent that we need to find better ways to include our isolated elder members.

Our purpose is to carry the message to our older alcoholics. Elder alcoholics (AA members and potential members) are in a universal phase of life with its own blessings and challenges and are an ever increasing segment of our A.A. membership.

If you are not in this phase of your development - you soon will be.

We hope to assist Area 9 groups and districts to lessen the barriers, physical and technological, that contribute to elder isolation in Alcoholic Anonymous.

~~~~Our Elders need your help! ~~~~

1. Look around when you go to your meetings,

- Is the building accessible to our members who are physically challenged?

- Are your “virtual” meetings offering closed captioning?
- Do they have volunteers to help elders call into A.A. meetings from a landline telephone?
- Can your volunteers help elders navigate through the techno babble?
- *Some Elders are set in their ways and have a hard time with new technology but respond well when you take the time to walk them through the process of getting online.*
- *It may take several times before they get comfortable being “virtually” social.*
- “Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the fellowship of the spirit.” Help our elders find a way to join us as we “trudge the road of Happy Destiny.”

2. Get involved - go to your Intergroup meetings.

Report what you find to your local Intergroup or Central Office. Help them update our meeting directories. Help our elders join us.

3. Accessible meetings should be easy to find!

Meeting directories should make it plain where you can locate an accessible meeting.

If you don't readily see one suggest they create a category or symbol .

Remember a lot of Elders have poor vision and aren't familiar with navigating through webpage layouts.

4. Do you have an old cell phone, tablet, iPhone, iPad, laptop, or computer? Can't we find an elder that needs a way to connect online?

5. If your group hasn't done a group inventory lately - maybe this is the time - don't leave out some of our Elder members! In March of 2018 Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office published your guide for a searching and fearless group inventory! a [\(SMF-208\)](#) ["Accessibilities Checklist For Meetings And Groups"](#) (see below!)

Yours in Service,

Jerry Smith, Chairperson

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(SMF-208) “Accessibilities Checklist For Meetings And Groups”

How accessible is your meeting? This is a guide to help reduce the physically-based access barriers that a person may encounter when attending meetings in your location.

Introduction:

The meeting location should be physically accessible so that anyone may arrive on site, approach the building, and enter the meeting without barriers.

Following are some questions your group can answer to determine the overall accessibility of your meeting space.

PARKING:

- Are an adequate number of accessible parking spaces available? (9 feet wide for car, plus 5-foot wide access aisle)
- Are spaces close to accessible entrances?
- Are spaces marked with identification signs?
- Is the parking area or street clear of snow, ice, or other debris?
- Is a path of travel by wheelchair accessible from the street or parking area?

- Are the sidewalks even and in good repair? Are there curb cut-outs to facilitate access to the sidewalk?

ROUTE OF TRAVEL:

- Is the meeting place accessible to public transportation?
- Is there a clear route of travel that does not require the use of stairs?
- Can any potential obstacles along pathways — including hanging objects — be detected by a person using a cane or other mobility device?
- If the meeting is at night, is the pathway well lit?

ENTRANCE:

- Does the entrance have steps, a threshold, or other physical barriers?
- If so, is there a ramp, lift, or an alternate entrance that is accessible?
- Is the ramp excessively steep? Does it have railings?
- Is the lift in good working order? If the lift is operated by a key, does someone on location have possession of the key or know where the key is kept?

- Is there signage indicating the location of the alternate accessible entrance?
- Does the entrance door have adequate width (32") and clearance to accommodate a wheelchair?
- Can the doors be opened by someone in a wheelchair or would he or she need assistance?

INSIDE THE BUILDING:

- Is there level access from the wheelchair accessible entrance to the meeting area?
- If not, are there ramps to enable someone in a wheelchair to reach the meeting? (Lifting someone over steps or stairs is not an acceptable solution for access.)
- If there is an elevator or a lift, is it in good working order? If the elevator or lift is operated by a key, does someone on location have possession of the key or know where the key is kept?
- Are corridors and door widths (32") adequate for passage of a wheelchair?
- Are corridors reasonably clear to allow safe passage for everyone?

RESTROOMS:

- Is at least one fully accessible restroom available?
- Are the stall doors operable?
- Is there adequate space for a person in a wheelchair to maneuver within the stall? (44" for forward movement and a five-foot diameter or T-shape of clear space to make turns.)
- Are there grab bars on the walls behind and to the side nearest the toilet?
- Can the faucet be operated without grasping, twisting, or turning?

THE MEETING ROOM:

- Are chairs set up with adequate aisle space for a wheelchair?
- Is the lighting adequate?
- Is there a designated section for members who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing?
- If so, is there adequate space for a sign language interpreter to sit with easy access to that group?

- Is someone available to welcome people and orient them to the meeting space as needed.
- Is the coffee service accessible to a person in a wheelchair or with another type of mobility device?
- Is A.A. literature available that addresses the needs of individuals with diverse abilities?
- Does the local intergroup/central office know that the meeting space is available to people with diverse accessibility needs?

Additional information about Accessibilities and setting up your meeting space may be available from your district or area Accessibilities Committee Cooperation with the Elder Community Committee or your local intergroup/central office.

You may also want to search the internet for a variety of Accessibilities Guides and information. In addition, the following accessibilities service materials are available on our A.A. website at www.aa.org.

1. [A.A. Guidelines — Accessibility for All Alcoholics \(MG-16\)](#)

2. [A.A. Guidelines — Sharing the A.A. Message with the Alcoholic Who Is Deaf \(MG-13\)](#)
3. [Serving All Alcoholics \(F-107\)](#)

Make a difference! Get involved!