

*The following is a question and answer session between the Portland Deaf Access Committee and the General Service Office.*

From: Nominating  
Sent: Friday, May 29, 2009 6:45 PM  
To: lou.c  
Subject: Portland Deaf Access Committee

Lou, I will try to summarize yesterday's telephone conversation in which I tried to share collected GSO experience in response to your thoughtful questions.

**Q - What is your experience in defining an A.A. committee?**

R - A.A. service committees are usually defined as "by A.A. members, for A.A. members, about A.A." providing that their service conforms to A.A.'s primary purpose, carrying A.A.'s message of recovery and that their service is based on A.A.'s Steps, Tradition and principles, one of the most important being working through a group conscience.

**Q - Who decides whether a separate service committee is needed?**

R. Our experience indicates that A.A. communities work together to decide the scope of service committees. The goal of local service committees' cooperation is to avoid duplication of services. When service committees have similar scopes, they often invite other committee members to their meetings as committee liaisons to work together with good orderly direction.

**Q - Does a committee have to be established by an Intergroup, District or Area to be part of AA?**

R - Not in our experience. A very wide reaching, older and successful Hospital & Institutions Committee in California is autonomous and not associated with an Intergroup, District or Area.

**Q - If a committee is established by members rather than an Intergroup, District or Area would they be an outside organization?**

R - It is our experience that if a committee is made up of A.A. members, to serve A.A. members by carrying A.A.'s message and if it operates using A.A. Steps, Traditions and principles, such a committee has been accepted as part of A.A.

**Q - Is it appropriate for a non-A.A. ASL interpreter to be in an open or closed A.A. meeting?**

R - Our experience is that many group consciences of both open and closed meetings have agreed to allow professional non-A.A. ASL interpreters to translate for an A.A. member in their meetings. In order to help both newcomers and longtime A.A. members, some groups announce at the beginning of the meeting that the professional translator is bound by a code of ethics and that all interpreted communications are confidential. Some A.A. members have pointed out that an interpreter, like a wheelchair, is just a method or apparatus to help an A.A. member with special needs.

**Q - Why can't deaf/hard-of-hearing A.A. members have their own meetings so we won't have to deal with interpreters?**

R - GSO experience indicates that limiting an A.A. meeting to a narrow category of A.A. members may not allow the full, rich message of A.A. to be available. An example is a group that meets in a school

where only young people with limited sobriety attend. They are not able to take advantage of longer time sobriety, experience, strength and hope. Our experience is that deaf members report that attending regular ASL interpreted meetings of A.A. helps them with their spiritual condition and often helps them avoid the temptation to feel isolated and relapse.

Lou, please let me know if I have missed anything we discussed. In the meantime, all her join me in sending along our sincerest gratitude to the PDA Committee for your commitment to carrying A.A. message of hope to those who cannot hear it but who rely on A.A. service committees to provide access to our life-saving message.

In fellowship, Valerie

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