

"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)

❖ **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 is 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 committees.
 - 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 Access 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/line item 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.