

Al-Anon guidelines

The Shared Experience of Al-Anon and Alateen Members.

Al-Anon Information Services (AIS)

G-4

An Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) is a local service established by one or more groups or districts located close enough to one another for easy access and communication. Any local Al-Anon or Alateen group may participate in an information service.

An AIS exists to aid the groups it serves in the common purpose of carrying the Al-Anon message to the suffering families and friends of alcoholics.

Things To Consider Before You Get Started:

- Research options available for phone service, postal and e-mail addresses; remember that an AIS cannot use a member's personal phone, address, or e-mail.
- Research operational costs of rent, post office box, phone service, phone listings, insurance, utilities, Internet, paid staff, and other AIS needs.
- Determine geographic boundaries and number of groups to support the proposed AIS.
- Assess volunteer support, including bilingual members if appropriate for the community.
- Determine types of services to be provided by phone, e.g. meeting information, Twelfth Step calls, etc.
- Clearly define service roles, in keeping with Concept Ten.
- Plan for training of staff and volunteers.

What Services Does an AIS Provide to the Groups It Serves? (may include one or all of the following)

- Receives inquiries and directs them to the appropriate group. A list of group contacts, with telephone numbers and e-mail addresses, should be kept up-to-date for this purpose.
- Publishes a local meeting directory.
- Collaborates with the Area Group Records Coordinator to keep meeting information up-to-date.
- Channels local Alateen and Public Outreach inquiries to a local AIS or district committee.
- Maintains a supply of complimentary literature to give newcomers, the professional community, and the general public.
- May distribute its own newsletter of local activities and articles written by members for the groups it serves, in keeping with the Traditions. See *Guidelines for Newsletter Editors* (G-21).
- Holds periodic meetings attended by Information Service Representatives (ISRs) from the groups it serves. AIS activity reports are made and discussions held on matters relating to the AIS and the groups. Other topics may include public outreach projects and fund-raising events.
- May maintain an AIS Web site, in cooperation with the Area. See *Guideline for Al-Anon Web Sites* (G-40).

How Does the AIS Collaborate and Communicate with Local Groups, Districts, and the Area?

- The Information Service is supported by the groups within its geographic boundaries. Contributions from Al-Anon groups and members are voluntary, and are not a condition for membership. The AIS does not seek or accept support outside the geographic area it serves.
- An AIS serves the groups in its geographic area, regardless of language or culture. Utilizing bilingual volunteers and stocking materials in languages other than English will help all newcomers to find a meeting and assure that all groups feel included in the AIS services.
- It is suggested that there be a representative from every group at Al-Anon Information Service meetings. Often the Alternate Group Representative will serve as the group's Information Service Representative (ISR).
- Often the Alternate District Representative(s) from the participating district(s) serve on the Information Service Board or Committee.
- An Al-Anon Information Service Liaison (AISL) represents the AIS at Area World Service Committee (AWSC) Meetings.
- When AIS committees are formed, they work in cooperation with the district/Area coordinator or the corresponding Area committee.
- An AIS may also serve as a Literature Distribution Center (LDC). When the two entities are functioning at the same location, the WSO will register them as an AIS/LDC, with one identification number. See the guideline *Literature Distribution Centers* (G-18), for more information.
- As stated in the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" Section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*, under "Autonomy of Groups," "In keeping with the Traditions and Warranty Five of Concept Twelve, Area or WSO service entities have no authority to close a group or engage in other punitive actions against a group because they disapprove of the manner in which a group practices the Al-Anon program." AISs develop criteria for groups' inclusion on their meeting lists. If a group does not wish

to comply with the criteria, it can be taken off the list, and informed of the actions needed to be re-listed. Taking a group off a meeting list does not prevent the group from participating and voting at AIS meetings and other activities.

- Participation and cooperation are the keys. The more members involved, the lighter the work. Experience shows that when the Information Service works closely with the Area and districts, it increases its formula for success!

Process for Registration

An AIS needs:

- *A title indicative of the nature of its operation, e.g., “Al-Anon Information Service”* (sometimes called “Intergroup” or “Service Center”).
- *A listing in the local telephone directory.* The number cannot be listed in an individual member’s name. Making “Al-Anon” the first word of the listing ensures that a newcomer or professional can find Al-Anon. Suggested listing: Al-Anon Family Groups [location] Information Service. Cross listings may include: Alateen; Alcoholism, families of; or Alcoholism, help for the family.
- *A post office box or an office address.* The Information Service will be listed in *Getting in Touch with Al-Anon/Alateen* (S-23), a publication for the membership and the public. In this way prospective members may be referred to Al-Anon without revealing the anonymity of members. *Getting in Touch* lists U.S. and Canadian AISs, international Al-Anon General Service Offices (GSOs), and AISs in countries without a GSO. AIS contact information is also posted on the WSO Public Outreach Web Site, www.alanon.alateen.org.
- *An e-mail address that is unique to the AIS.* No personal e-mail addresses can be used. An AIS (or AIS/LDC) can use only one e-mail address for communication and transactions with the WSO.
- *An operation that conducts activities in addition to Twelfth Step telephone calls.* For example: work with local Al-Anon/Alateen service committees, publish meeting lists, and perform any other function as described in this guideline or the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27).

In the World Service Conference (WSC) structure (U.S., Canada, Bermuda, and Puerto Rico), the proposed AIS must complete an AIS Registration Form, obtain required Area and local signatures, and submit it to the WSO. Members in countries outside of the WSC structure should contact the WSO for AIS registration information.

How the AIS Operates

- *Volunteers* - Phones can be answered by volunteers whenever possible. Finding volunteers may be the hardest part of running the Information Service. It is helpful to have committed and trained volunteers already in place before registering your Information Service, including bilingual volunteers who can respond to non-English speaking callers.
- *Professional Answering Service or Telephone Answering Machine (Voice Mail)* - Employing an answering service or using a telephone answering machine/voice mail may solve the problem of receiving calls when volunteers and/or staff are not available. When using a recording, leave a pleasant Al-Anon-related message. Include meeting information for that day, if time permits. Bilingual messages may be needed in places where languages other than English are prevalent. Call forwarding allows volunteers to respond from home, and volunteers answer the calls in an Al-Anon manner when performing this service.
- *Paid Staff* - As an AIS grows, additional help may be needed. According to Tradition Eight, paid help may be hired for the bookkeeping, correspondence, office duties, etc. A member’s personal knowledge of Al-Anon is of value in an office, but he or she is paid for office work only. Who is hired, who will do the hiring, the hours, salary and benefits are usually decided by the Information Service Board. The Twelve Concepts of Service define how paid employees fit into our service structure.

An employee of an AIS does not serve as a volunteer in a policy-making position, such as Group Representative (GR), District Representative (DR), Area Assembly officer or Coordinator, Delegate, or WSO Trustee (See “Employees in Al-Anon Service” in the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*).

Additional Business Information

Nonprofit, Tax-Free Status - The U.S. non-profit and Canadian registered charity status which apply to Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. and Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters (Canada) Inc. do not cover individual segments of the fellowship. The WSO has no control over AISs’ financial affairs, nor does it have any say on how they conduct their business. Each group, district, Area, and Information Service is autonomous in its operations within the Traditions. An AIS seeking state, provincial, and/or federal tax-free status would require the help of legal counsel.

Incorporation - When an AIS maintains an office, it might be wise to incorporate. Individual Information Services write their own charters or bylaws in keeping with their state/provincial laws. Legal assistance may be required. The World Service Office is willing to review such documents before they are filed.

NOTE: The *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) contains additional information about AISs, LDCs, and Information Service Representatives (ISRs). The complete *Service Manual*, public outreach ideas, and Al-Anon guidelines are available on the Members’ Web site, www.al-anon.alateen.org/members.