

Public Outreach

Much of the direction for Al-Anon's public outreach has been based on the 1966 WSC statement on Public Relations that has long been a part of the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies." Many of the spiritual principles that form the foundation of Al-Anon's policy are contained in the statement included here in its entirety. Excerpts denoted in this section are marked with the symbol (□).

The 1966 WSC Statement on Public Relations

Our Traditions state that our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion. For clarification, the sixth World Service Conference (1966) adopted the following statement, which was reaffirmed at the 1971 WSC:

It is the consensus of the sixth World Service Conference that if Al-Anon is to continue to exist, it must continue to grow. There is no standing still without retrogression. Al-Anon must continue to grow if it is going to fulfill its primary purpose of reaching millions who need Al-Anon's help but who are not yet aware of the existence of our fellowship.

We will fulfill this primary purpose most effectively by attraction and cooperation—not promotion or affiliation. For the guidance of our fellowship here are authoritative definitions of these sometimes controversial terms:

- to attract: to draw by other than physical influence; to invite; to draw to; to cause to approach
- to promote: to push forward; to further advance, as in a business venture (implies "hard sell," advancement for profit)
- cooperation: joint operation or action (implies coming together of two or more people to work together for a common goal or benefit or on a common problem)
- affiliation: association or close connection; a uniting (implies lending one's name, endorsement, legal or financial association)

Al-Anon is *attracting* when it tells people why we are, what we are, what we do and how; we let them know that we are available if and when help is needed. We state the facts, which are communicated via the press, radio, TV, and films, always stressing anonymity at the public level.

Al-Anon is *cooperating* when it works with others,* rather than alone. In working with others, our scope and contacts are broadened and we reach many more of those in need.

[footnote with paragraph above]

*□ *Examples are federal, state, provincial, and municipal alcoholism agencies; private health agencies; law enforcement, judicial, and correctional agencies and institutions; general hospitals and state, county, or city mental hospitals; councils of churches, doctors, nurses, clergymen, social workers, educators.*

The Philosophy and Spiritual Principles of Al-Anon's Public Outreach

Our public outreach is based on the following spiritual principles that promote unity and clarity within the fellowship as well as awareness and hope outside the fellowship. Whenever there are questions concerning public outreach, it is helpful to return to these spiritual principles for resolution:

- *Members and groups carry the message.*
- *Outreach is based on attraction, rather than promotion.*
- *Personal anonymity is maintained at the level of press, radio, films, TV, and the Internet.*
- *Cooperation and goodwill strengthen public outreach.*
- *Members continually broaden the way they carry the message by using new and innovative forms of communication.*

Members and Groups Carry the Message

Carrying the message is essential to attracting new members. Our Twelfth Step suggests that members carry the message of recovery to others and make Al-Anon known in their communities.

Al-Anon members who do Twelfth Step work carry the message of Al-Anon recovery keeping in mind adherence to Tradition Eleven. There is no replacement for individual Al-Anon members carrying the spiritual message of recovery within their communities in ways that media cannot.

Local Public Outreach: Roles and Responsibilities

Al-Anon members who have an understanding of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions have an important role in local public outreach. They carry the message of hope through local media, and to professionals throughout their communities.

Providing speakers and literature for community events, participating and exhibiting at health fairs, placing ads in public places, and talking with local radio and TV stations to request that they play public service announcements are some local outreach opportunities. (See also, “Members Continually Broaden the Way They Carry the Message by Using New and Innovative Forms of Communication”.)

Making Contact with Professionals

To ensure that professionals are aware of Al-Anon as a credible resource for helping friends and families of alcoholics, groups, districts, and other service arms can host public meetings, inviting members of the professional community. Meeting schedules and contact information on the Web sites of Area and local service arms should contain current and accurate information. In this way, the public will have direct and ready access to information, furthering Al-Anon/Alateen’s reputation as a credible local resource.

Personal sharing with professionals is one way to carry the message of hope to others. Members may have established relationships with doctors, nurses, members of the clergy, therapists, educators, or other professionals. Every Al-Anon member is encouraged to share the benefits of Al-Anon with members of the professional community with whom they come into contact, divulging their Al-Anon membership whenever they are comfortable doing so. These one-on-one relationships provide the professional with credible evidence of the benefits of Al-Anon’s program of recovery, and may encourage

them to learn more about Al-Anon and perhaps recommend the Al-Anon program to others. Al-Anon does not endorse any outside enterprise. Professionals may endorse the Al-Anon program without violating the Traditions provided that they do not reveal Al-Anon membership.

National and International Public Outreach: Roles and Responsibilities

Although Al-Anon members carry the message of Al-Anon, it is the World Service Office (WSO) that is solely responsible for creating public outreach messages beyond the local level. This ensures that there is consistency in media messages throughout the world.

The World Service Conference has designated the WSO as the sole publishing agent for the fellowship and sole producer of public service announcements (PSAs). The WSO is responsible for production and distribution of all multi-Area, national, and worldwide communications, including those on the Internet.

Whenever national publicity on Al-Anon/Alateen may be of interest to local groups, they are, if possible, notified in advance by the WSO.

An Al-Anon general service structure outside the United States and Canada that has received permission from the WSO to print Conference Approved Literature may reprint WSO public outreach materials. The general service structure is not limited in the number of public outreach pieces it can produce. The WSO reserves the right to review such items before publication or broadcast.

Paid Advertisements

A group may pay for an ad in the media to make the community aware of Al-Anon and Alateen. In accordance with our Traditions, an individual member may pay for such an ad, with group approval. This payment can be considered a member's personal contribution.

Members and local service arms may pay for local advertisements, for example: billboards, screen ads at movie theaters, and transit signs. The WSO reserves the right to approve the content of the message before public placement.

Publicizing Meeting Locations

Meeting information may be printed in church bulletins, newspapers, and other venues for sharing public information.

WSO Produced Posters

Al-Anon/Alateen posters may be displayed on the Internet or any public place, with the permission of the place or organization. A local Al-Anon service phone number, P.O. Box, Web site, e-mail, and/or office address, may be used as a point of contact.

Posters and Flyers for Public Outreach for Al-Anon Service Arms

Al-Anon Information Services and Area World Service Committees may have a need for public outreach posters that can be produced and distributed within their area of service. This could include outreach to a particular cultural group, for example. Districts, Information Services, and Areas work together on such projects, so the Al-Anon message remains consistent and unity among the service arms is ensured. Service arms contact the WSO before creating a poster. The WSO has posters available for a variety of needs and

topics that might meet the needs of an AIS or Area. The WSO extends permission for such posters, reserving the right to review these items before they are printed and distributed, in order to preserve Al-Anon's public outreach message. These outreach posters may appear on the Internet, provided that no member's name, phone number, or other identifying information appears, so that anonymity is maintained. Permission is not required when public outreach flyers are created for a single local event. Flyers on the Internet are accessible to the public and must protect members' anonymity.

Outreach Publications – AIS/Area

Although the Conference has designated Al-Anon's WSO as the sole publishing agent for the fellowship, the WSO extends permission to Al-Anon Information Services or Area World Service Committees for the production of only one publication for public outreach, for distribution solely within their area of service, reserving the right to review the publication before printing and distribution in order to preserve Al-Anon's public outreach message. To assist potential members in locating a meeting, a meeting schedule is frequently included with such a publication.

Outreach Publications - International

An Al-Anon general service structure outside the United States and Canada that has received permission from the WSO to print Conference Approved Literature may reprint WSO public outreach materials. The general service structure is not limited in the number of public outreach pieces produced. The WSO reserves the right to review such items before publication.

Public Service Announcements

The media (TV, radio, newspapers, etc.) offer free air time or print space to not-for-profit organizations for public service announcements (PSAs). Al-Anon provides such PSAs to inform the general public about Al-Anon and Alateen. The World Service Conference has designated the WSO as sole producer of public service announcements for the fellowship to use in public outreach work.

Area/Local Public Outreach Messages

Areas and local service arms may produce and participate in public announcements, programs, broadcasts, or community calendar items that are of local interest, have local impact, or reflect a local culture's needs. These may be provided to local radio, television, or community cable stations. In such projects, Tradition Eleven is maintained by avoiding recognition of the participants and by the use of first names or pseudonyms. Prior to broadcast, the WSO reserves the right to review such projects for consistency with the Al-Anon message.

Outreach is Based on Attraction, Rather than Promotion

It has always been Al-Anon's approach to carry a clear and simple message about our program of recovery – that is: to let people know what we are, what we do, and how they

can come into contact with us. We do this in many creative ways while avoiding high pressure tactics which distort our message of hope or bring us into public controversy.

We attract interest in Al-Anon Family Groups when we communicate what our lives were like before we came to Al-Anon, what we found in Al-Anon that helped us, and what our lives are like today. In error, we would be promoting Al-Anon if we offered promises, guarantees, personal advice, or gave the impression that we are the experts who know what is best for all families and friends of alcoholics.

Personal Anonymity is Maintained at the Level of Press, Radio, Films, TV, and the Internet

Tradition Twelve tells us that anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our entire program. Members maintain personal anonymity in all forms of public media, including press, radio, films, TV, and the Internet, as well as other ways of reaching the public. It is essential that members consider Tradition Eleven as they keep public outreach messages free from personalities. No one person can ever be the sole representative of Al-Anon. The message of recovery in the media is too important to be overshadowed by a single person or group no matter how well-intentioned.

Anonymity at Local Events for Individuals and Service Arms

As an organization, Al-Anon is not a secret; however, we always protect our members' anonymity. Members are encouraged to participate in local events where Al-Anon information can be shared. Participation at health fairs, speaking at schools, etc., where members might be recognized, is not considered a break in anonymity, since it does not occur at the level of press, radio, films, TV, and the Internet.

If the media is present, members who staff such events are requested to practice the principle of personal anonymity. (See "Anonymity in Public Media for Individuals and Local Service Arms.")

Anonymity in Public Media for Individuals and Local Service Arms

Tradition Eleven is sustained when members maintain personal anonymity by using first name only or a pseudonym, and by appearing back to the camera or in silhouette. This principle applies to all types of visual, audio, or print media, or in any way on the Internet, when Al-Anon/Alateen membership is revealed.

If membership is not revealed when participating in any form of public media, members can use their full name, face the camera, or appear in print. Members avoid revealing the identity of any A.A. member.

As an individual, not an Al-Anon spokesperson, any member may write an article about the fellowship for local or national publications, and may be financially remunerated. The personal anonymity of someone writing as a member is maintained by signing anonymously or using a pseudonym. Personal anonymity also applies to members who author books or create other public communications.

Cooperation and Goodwill Strengthen Public Outreach

Al-Anon fulfills its primary purpose most effectively by cooperating with others and creating goodwill in the media and in the professional community.

Al-Anon is *cooperating* when it works with others, rather than alone. In working with others, our scope and contacts are broadened and we reach many more of those in need. However, we would give the impression of affiliation if we posted links to professional services on an Al-Anon Web site, or if we added the Al-Anon name as sponsor or co-sponsor for a commercial or community event. The concept of goodwill is simply maintaining our positive relationships and reputation as we work with others. Al-Anon exhibits goodwill when it works harmoniously in the community to provide information and carry the message of hope. In accordance with Tradition Ten, the Al-Anon fellowship does not officially respond to adverse publicity and avoids public controversy. As individuals, members may take any action they wish, as long as they do not divulge their membership or appear to be a spokesperson for Al-Anon.

Members Continually Broaden the Way They Carry the Message by Using New and Innovative Forms of Communication

In the dynamic world in which we live, we need always consider broadening our outreach efforts so that those needing our help may easily find us. This means that there is no end to the possibilities for carrying our message locally, nationally, and internationally.

In developing or conducting public outreach using new forms of communication, including emerging technologies, Al-Anon's outreach message is safeguarded by consistently referencing the primary purpose of public outreach and by applying its underlying spiritual principles.

Media

Individual Al-Anon members and groups are encouraged to work with their districts, Al-Anon Information Services, and Area World Service Committees on projects for media outreach. In this way, a broad group conscience is reached and the Al-Anon message remains consistent.

The Internet

The Internet is a global computer network that is in the public domain. Service arms are encouraged to post WSO Public Service Announcements on the Internet or to create links to the WSO Public Outreach Web site. In keeping with our Legacies, Al-Anon members guard with care their own and others' anonymity, and avoid any actions or behaviors that could draw Al-Anon into public controversy or harm Al-Anon's name. (See "Social Networking-Individual Members/Groups/Service Arms." Service guidelines are available on the Al-Anon Members' Web site.)

Social Networking Media

While social networking and social media Internet sites and blogs present special challenges to members and the WSO, social networking can be an important venue for carrying the message of Al-Anon as Al-Anon fulfills its primary purpose of reaching millions who are not yet aware of the existence of our fellowship.

Social Networking-Individual Members/Groups/Service Arms

Blogs, profiles, social networks, or other forms of social media are appropriate for public outreach. Members maintain the principle of anonymity and do not appear to speak for Al-Anon as a whole. They avoid actions, behaviors, or commentary that could draw Al-Anon into public controversy or harm Al-Anon’s name and public outreach message.

The names “Al-Anon” and “Alateen” are trademark names and may not be used as usernames, logos, or identifying characteristics on profiles, blogs, or in titles of social media pages. Only Al-Anon service arms may use the Al-Anon logo. (See also “Anonymity” and “Symbols/Logos” section of the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies.”)

Social Networking–WSO

The WSO, in carrying out its responsibility for creating public outreach messages beyond the local level, will continually look for new ways to do so, using the capabilities of social networking and emerging technologies, while adhering to Al-Anon’s spiritual principles.