

Upstate Intergroup

24 Hour Hotline Service



Volunteer Handbook

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www.upstateintergroup.org

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Welcome to the Upstate Intergroup 24 X 7 Hotline Service:

We are glad to have you join our team and sincerely thank you for your time and service for this critical need.

Suggested things to do before you start

1. Read this guide booklet as needed. The procedures, “dos” and “don’ts”, information on handling specific calls and reference materials should be familiar to you. (See following pages)
2. If you need help with a call or are uncomfortable dealing with a situation, please email the volunteers at hotlinehelp@upstateintergroup.org. This will send a broadcast message to the other volunteers who can provide some assistance.
3. Familiarize yourself with our online meeting directory as well as the locations and types of meetings being held. (<https://upstateintergroup.org/meetings/>) This is the most up-to-date local guide and should be your first resource when helping callers find and locate meetings.
4. Read the Chapter Working with Others from the Big Book. It is a powerful resource that helps remind us of our limits and responsibilities. We cannot want for others more than they want for themselves.

Settle in and have fun sharing your experience, strength and hope!

Overview

What is the hotline service?

The hotline is a phone service which is staffed by volunteers in recovery. ***The primary purpose is to connect those who are still sick and suffering with local sober members of alcoholics anonymous and direct them to meetings*** so they too can share in the miracle that is recovery.

How does the hotline service work?

When callers call our hotline, they hear a greeting which provides them two options. They may press 1 if they have access to the internet and are looking to find a meeting. (We direct them to our Intergroup website where we have our interactive meeting finder tools) They may press 2 if they want to be connected with a local sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The hotline is currently set up with two shifts per day: 8AM – 8PM and 8PM – 8AM (Overnight).

Volunteers sign up for a DAY and SHIFT of their choosing. This is static (meaning you take the same DAY and SHIFT each week). Calls are automatically routed to a phone of your choosing. When a call is sent to you, it displays the Intergroup Hotline Caller ID so you know it's AA. If you are able, you answer the call on your end by pressing 1.

The hotline also allows for multiple volunteers on a shift; you are not alone and are not obligated to take all calls. This is a “WE” program.

In addition, we have a group of volunteers called Hotline Hero's. They have signed up to be available any day and any time. If you miss the call for any reason, the heroes are there to back you up.

This allows us to assign days and shifts without having to worry about individual needs. If you can't answer the call, no problem. No more monthly calendar, no more scheduling conflicts. Be of service when you can with minimal obstacles.

Why do we have a hotline service?

Answering calls from still-suffering alcoholics is a primary objective of the Intergroup. The volunteer's voice is often the first, and sometimes the only, contact a still-suffering alcoholic will have with AA. This hotline service is truly the 12th Step and the 5th Tradition in action. Remember, a calm voice and a gentle, non-judgmental manner can instill trust in a newcomer.

A voice on the telephone cheerfully offers understanding and compassion to the alcoholic who has sunken to despair and hopelessness. Volunteers, who are sober members of AA and have working knowledge of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, and who have experience in 12-Stepping, have saved many a life just by proving that in Alcoholics Anonymous, we really care. Hotline volunteers provide this primary service of the Interoffice Group – carrying the message of recovery to the “alcoholic who still suffers.” The voice on the telephone is AA to the caller, and its calm, caring attention assures any alcoholic calling for help that he/she will get the help they may so desperately need.

We get many types of calls to the AA Intergroup, and many of them require special handling. The most important caller is the still suffering alcoholic and, for them, a 12th Step visit or return call is your most important action.

In your sincere desire to help, *remember we are trying to connect the callers with our local fellowships, do what you can to connect with them and encourage them to get to a meeting as quickly as possible.*

Observing the Traditions with calls

It is important to remember the 5th, 10th and 12th traditions when handling all calls.

Tradition 5:

Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic...there are other groups, organizations or people to help with other problems.

Tradition 10:

We have no opinion on outside issues...or treatment centers, hospitals, groups or organizations...we neither endorse nor oppose them.

Tradition 12:

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions...**we never, ever...NEVER, EVER...give out the name, address or telephone number of another member of AA over the AA telephone. There is no exception to this rule.**

Rather, we take a number where the caller can be reached and tell them we will have someone call them back as soon as we can. This procedure applies to 12th Step call as well as requests for speakers, information or for any other reason.

Quick Reference Guide

Please Do

Be aware and ready for your day and shift.

Prepare yourself ahead of time

- Familiar with online meeting schedule
- Install the Meeting Guide App on your smartphone
- hotlinehelp@upstateintergroup.org

Remain calm, courteous and businesslike at all times.

Remember your role... *connect those who are still sick and suffering with local sober members of Alcoholics Anonymous and direct them to meetings*

Be mindful of the traditions...especially 5, 10 & 12.

Please Don't

GIVE OUT THE NAME, PHONE NUMBER OR ADDRESS OF ANOTHER AA MEMBER- NO EXCEPTIONS.

Admit knowledge of whether or not someone else is a member of AA- simply say "I can't answer that."

Approve of, disapprove of, or add support to any other organization, group, treatment center or program.

12 Step Call List:

You are the list; so is everyone else on the hotline service, and even people you know that are not on the hotline. **What does this mean?**

In the past we had a separate 12 Step Call list. For about as long as we have had a list, it has been outdated and difficult to use. We are adopting this new method to ease the burden and help those who are still sick and suffering.

To sum it up,

“I am responsible, when anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there, and for that I am responsible.”

It means, that if you are able, you will help connect the caller with resources to get them to meetings. You are NOT expected nor encouraged to rescue every drunk from their predicament.

Simply stated, be the voice of encouragement. If they need a ride and you are willing, great. If not, use the hotlinehelp@upstateintergroup.org email to ask others for help. Use your own local fellowship resources to see if you can solve the problem.

Reach out to the coordinator to see if they can assist or provide guidance.

Ideally, we agree to meet newcomers AT LOCAL MEETINGS where they and we can be assured of right conduct and intention.

DO NOT PUT YOURSELF OR ANYONE ELSE IN DANGER. USE CAUTION WHEN AGREEING TO MEET AND WHERE POSSIBLE TAKE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER.

Handling Specific Types of Calls

Our Procedure:

Our primary goal should be to encourage and direct them to a local AA meeting so they can begin the journey. Do your best to help reduce their fear and where possible arrange to meet them or have another volunteer meet them at a local AA group so they have a warm introduction.

We refrain from giving any advice on any subject; that is not our role. We have 12 simple suggestions only.

If a ride is needed, get their contact information and let them know you will attempt to arrange a ride by reaching out to our local fellowship.

If you cannot locate someone to help within ½ hour, call the caller back yourself to assure them that you will have someone soon. Don't lose contact.

NEVER, EVER GIVE OUT THE NAME, TELEPHONE NUMBER, OR ADDRESS OF ANY MEMBER OF AA FOR ANY REASON. NO EXCEPTIONS!

Callers who are under the influence

Bill offers the following guidance on this matter located on page 90 of our Big Book.

"If he does not want to stop drinking, don't waste time trying to persuade him. You may spoil a later opportunity. This advice is given for his family also. They should be patient, realizing they are dealing with a sick person."

"Don't deal with him when he is very drunk, unless he is ugly and the family needs your help. Wait for the end of the spree, or at least for a lucid interval."

Reading the chapter Working with Others will prepare you for what we are responsible for in this area.

Helping the Problem Drinker

That first call is a difficult one for a problem drinker, as many of us can recall! It may take time for the person to verbalize their purpose in making the call. The person may talk about a friend or relative who has a problem. Maybe they "just aren't sure" if they have a problem with drinking. While you cannot diagnose the caller's problem, *you can listen and share what the Big Book tells us in how to determine whether or not we are an alcoholic.* In any event, you will be able to determine what help is needed in a very short time. Please maintain a calm, reassuring voice.

It is best not to jump to any conclusions. If the person can admit that they have a problem, or may have a problem with drinking, perhaps they have begun to take the first step. A little coaxing may be necessary, but in any case, patience and tact are essential.

If possible, try to determine if the caller has had any previous contact with AA. If not, state that we are a fellowship of alcoholic men and women who help one another.

Explain that we are not a school, clinic, or a treatment center, and we do not practice therapy of any kind. We cannot give legal, medical or other professional advice and do not provide money, lodging or transportation to any place except a meeting (or a treatment center / detox if the caller requests).

Calls for Meeting Information

Many, if not most, of your calls will be of this type!

Many of these calls will be from travelling AA members who need to find a meeting. However, you may get a call from a fairly new person, or even a newcomer asking for this information.

Be sensitive to the type of meeting...OPEN or CLOSED.

Callers who ask where “classes are held” or make similar inquiries are usually, but not always, ordered to attend AA meetings by courts, family or bosses. Many may want signatures on an attendance record.

Closed meetings are limited to those who have a desire to stop drinking, and some of those do not sign attendance records. It is always the meeting chair person’s decision whether or not to sign such a record.

See the Resources section for the tools to help callers find meetings.

Calls for Help for a Problem Drinker from a Friend or Family Member

Explain that Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of recovering alcoholic men and women who help one another. We do not give medical, legal or other professional advice. We are not a school, clinic or treatment center and do not practice therapy of any kind. We do not provide money or lodging. Fundamentally, you may choose to tell the caller what AA is, but do not try to reach the alcoholic through another person.

In fact, even attempting to carry the message “secondhand” through the caller to the drinker is playing into the sickness that this friend or family member (the caller) has. Tell the caller about the Family Group of Al-Anon, and give them the number of the Al-Anon Hotline, if you wish (see the resource section below).

Try to get the alcoholic to call you directly.

One other note about such calls is that with some such calls the problem drinker may actually be the one calling but be too ashamed or embarrassed to admit it. Usually with a bit of tact, and careful listening, you can detect this from the caller.

Finally, as with all calls, remember the role. Be caring and polite, we are trying to encourage them to get connected with us at a local meeting.

Calls About Treatment Centers

Calls of this nature often come from friends or family members, or from problem drinkers themselves. In keeping with our traditions, we have no opinion on treatment centers; we neither endorse nor oppose them. We also cannot be affiliated with any of them. We simply acknowledge in general terms that they exist and have helped some recovering alcoholics. If asked for help of this nature, we can give the telephone number of the Greenville Commission on Alcohol & Drug Abuse-Phoenix Center (see resource section for link and number).

Calls About Other Addictions

For calls with problems other than alcoholism, please refer caller to telephone directory, internet search or suggest they call 911 for assistance

We have listed a few local resources for common issues, but generally this is none of our business as we are dealing with those seeking recovery from alcoholism. Do your best to be helpful but stay within the primary purpose of our program.

Calls after 8PM

In our area, the latest meetings we have begin at 8PM.

This means callers who call in after this time will not likelihood be able to get to a meeting on the same day. Do your best to encourage them and help them locate a meeting the next day. Remind them our service is 24 X 7 and if they feel the need to drink, they should instead call us, we are here to help.

Prank Calls

It happens. People think it's funny. It's not. If you have these calls, note the time and we can attempt to block them from the hotline. Report these to the coordinator for action.

Those needing rides:

Refer to the section above title Our Procedure.

The End!

Resources:

Utilize the following resources to help connect callers with local resources.

Online Meeting Finder:

Local: <https://upstateintergroup.org/meetings/>

Updated each Monday with any local change requests. It offers you the ability to search by city, district, date, time, and even using a map view.

If the caller has internet access, direct them to our site after helping them find a meeting.

Statewide: <http://area62.org/lookup.php>

Maintained by our Area, due to its nature it can be out of date. When using this to refer others to meetings, encourage them to verify the meeting is still being held or give them several options.

Meeting Guide App:



The app syncs the data from our website and can be used for FREE with any iPhone or Android device. This is a great resource for mobile volunteers and contains the same search capabilities as our website.

iOS: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/meeting-guide/id1042822181>

Google Play: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.meetingguide>

Printed Schedule

The intergroup produces an updated printed schedule which you can now view or print from home.

We update our site each Monday, make sure to check back often and update your printed version if this will be the tool you utilize most often.

Link: <https://upstateintergroup.org/printable-schedule/>

Other Resources

Al-Anon Family Groups - <https://www.al-anon-sc.org/> - Greenville Hotline 864-235-4638

Narcotics Anonymous - <https://www.narcotics.com/na-meetings/south-carolina/greenville-south-carolina/> - 1-800-407-7195

CRISIS Line - <http://www.mhagc.org/crisisline.php> - Greenville Hotline 864-271-8888

Phoenix Center - <http://www.phoenixcenter.org/detoxification.php> - 864-467-3790

Area62 Intergroups:

Grand Strand Intergroup

939 Broadway Street

Myrtle Beach, SC 29577

Office Phone: (843) 655-7674

Helpline - (843) 445-7119

Greater Columbia Intergroup

3014 Devine Street, Room 103

Columbia, SC 29205

Helpline - (803) 254-5301

Tri-County Intergroup

1827 Reynolds Avenue

North Charleston, SC 29405

Helpline - (843) 554-2998

Lowcountry Intergroup

20 Towne Drive

Bluffton, SC 29910

Helpline - (888) 534-0192