

Literature Activity Update, 5/2018

68th General Service Conference: The annual General Service Conference convened April 22-28, 2018. Recommendations from the 2018 Conference Committee on Literature resulted in the following Advisory Actions:

1. The revised pamphlet **"A.A. for the Woman,"** retitled **"Experience, Strength and Hope: Women in A.A.,"** be approved.
2. The revised pamphlet **"A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic,"** retitled **"Experience, Strength and Hope: LGBTQ Alcoholics in A.A.,"** be approved with minor edits provided by Publishing regarding use of gender specific language.
3. The revised pamphlet **"Inside A.A.: Understanding the Fellowship and its Services"** be approved.
4. The draft pamphlet **"Experience, Strength and Hope: A.A. for Alcoholics with Mental Health Issues – and their sponsors"** be approved.
5. The trustees' Literature Committee revise the pamphlet **"Questions and Answers on Sponsorship"** to include a section on anonymity and bring back a progress report or draft text to the 2019 Conference Committee on Literature.
6. The title of the pamphlet **"G.S.R. General Service Representative: May Be the Most Important Job in A.A."** be changed to **"G.S.R. General Service Representative: Your Group's Link to A.A. as a Whole."**
7. The following text (originally included in the 1998 edition of Living Sober) be added to Living Sober following the section titled "Note to Medical Professionals": We recognize that alcoholics are not immune to other diseases. Some of us have had to cope with depressions that can be suicidal; schizophrenia that sometimes requires hospitalization; bipolar disorder, and other mental and biological illnesses. Also among us are diabetics, epileptics, members with heart trouble, cancer, allergies, hypertension, and many other serious physical conditions. Because of the difficulties that many alcoholics have with drugs, some members have taken the position that no one in A.A. should take any medication. While this position has undoubtedly prevented relapses for some, it has meant disaster for others. A.A. members and many of their physicians have described situations in which depressed patients have been told by A.A.s to throw away the pills, only to have depression return with all its difficulties, sometimes resulting in suicide. We have heard, too, from members with other conditions, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, epilepsy and others requiring medication, that well-meaning A.A. friends discourage them from taking any prescribed medication. Unfortunately, by following a layperson's advice, the sufferers find that their conditions can return with all their previous intensity. On top of that, they feel guilty because they are convinced that "A.A. is against pills." It becomes clear that just as it is wrong to enable or support any alcoholic to become readdicted to any drug, it's equally wrong to deprive any alcoholic of medication, which can alleviate or control other disabling physical and/or emotional problems.
8. The trustees' Literature Committee undertake a comprehensive update to the video "Your General Service Office, the Grapevine and the General Service Structure" to reflect a contemporary presentation of the General Service and AA Grapevine offices as well as a current portrayal of the General Service Structure and bring back a progress report or draft updated video to the 2019 Conference Committee on Literature.
9. The pamphlet **"The God Word"** (currently published by the General Service Board of A.A., Great Britain) be adopted by A.A. World Services, Inc. with minor editorial changes.
10. The trustees' Literature Committee develop a **pamphlet based on A.A.'s Three Legacies**, with emphasis on the history of the Three Legacies, how they work together and including personal stories of members' experiences with the Three Legacies and bring back a progress report or draft pamphlet to the 2019 Conference Committee on Literature.
11. The trustees' Literature Committee develop a **pamphlet for Spanish-speaking women alcoholics** by gathering sharing from Spanish-speaking women in A.A. and bring back a progress report or draft pamphlet to the 2019 Conference Committee on Literature. The following Committee Considerations were presented to the Conference:
 - The committee considered a request to add the A.A. Preamble and Responsibility Statement to the book Alcoholics Anonymous and took no action. The committee noted that the A.A. Preamble and Responsibility Statement are adequately noted in other A.A. literature.

- The committee considered a request to add an endnote to Bill W.'s story in the book Alcoholics Anonymous acknowledging co-founder, Bob S., and took no action. The committee noted that acknowledgement of Bob S. ("Dr. Bob") as co-founder is currently mentioned in two separate places in the book Alcoholics Anonymous.
- The committee considered a request for the development of a new pamphlet for atheist and agnostic alcoholics and took no action. The committee agreed the recommendation that A.A.W.S. adopt/adapt the pamphlet "**The God Word**" responded to the need expressed by atheist and agnostic members of A.A.
- The committee requested that G.S.O. Publishing Department add AA Grapevine literature to the list of A.A. Publications noted on the back page of A.A. literature, as additional resources, when appropriate. For example, the AA Grapevine publication Voices of Women in A.A. could be added to the list of publications in the pamphlet "Experience, Strength and Hope: Women in A.A.," Sober and Out could be listed in the pamphlet "Experience, Strength and Hope: LGBTQ Alcoholics in A.A." and In Our Own Words could be included as a resource in the pamphlet "Young People and A.A."
- The committee reviewed the trustees' Literature Committee report on "Language Related to Safety in A.A. Literature." The committee requested that the trustees' Literature Committee develop text regarding safety in A.A. to be included in Living Sober and the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship," and bring back the draft text to the 2019 Conference Committee on Literature.
- The committee reviewed draft text for the pamphlet "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated," and offered additional suggestions for the trustees' Literature Committee to consider. The committee looks forward to reviewing a progress report or revised draft pamphlet at the 2019 General Service Conference.
- The committee reviewed a progress report on the revision of the pamphlet "Too Young?" The committee looks forward to reviewing a progress report or draft revised pamphlet at the 2019 General Service Conference.
- The committee reviewed a progress report from the trustees' Literature Committee on the revision of the pamphlet "**Young People and A.A.**" The committee looks forward to reviewing a progress report or draft revised pamphlet at the 2019 General Service Conference.
- The committee accepted the 2017 matrix of A.A. recovery literature.

What's New?

Navajo Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous. The Navajo Big Book (an audiobook in 14 CDs) will be available via our aa.org online stores June 1, 2018 at a list price of \$9.10. http://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/aaws-online-store-portals

Anonymity in the Digital Age: A poster for groups and meetings highlighting the importance of anonymity and how easy it is to break it is available (in English, French and Spanish) on www.aa.org.

English: https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/en_anonymity_placard.pdf

Spanish: https://www.aa.org/assets/es_ES/es_anonymity_placard.pdf

French: https://www.aa.org/assets/fr_FR/fr_anonymity_placard.pdf

Current Projects

Pursuant to Conference Advisory Actions, the trustees' Literature Committee and G.S.O. Publishing Department have been hard at work on revisions to the pamphlets "**The Twelve Traditions Illustrated**," "**Young People and A.A.**," and "**Too Young?**"

International Translations

With the new publication of the Navajo language Big Book (in CD format), Alcoholics Anonymous is available in 70 approved translations (71 languages total, including the original English.) Thirty-four (34) languages are printed and distributed by A.A.W.S., Inc., and 37 languages are licensed to be printed and distributed by local entities abroad (with 22 printed by both A.A.W.S., Inc. and international A.A. entities). There are 20 Big Book translations pending, at various stages of completion, which includes 13 new translations and 7 revisions.

Attached is a copy of a Box 4-5-9 article (originally published in the April/May 2008 issue) entitled "**Conference-Approved Literature: A Powerful Expression of A.A. Unity.**"

Conference-Approved Literature: A Powerful Expression of A.A. Unity

Box 4-5-9 article (originally published in the April/May 2008 issue)

Imagine today, as A.A. co-founder Bill W. did in 1964, what the Fellowship would be without its literature. “Suppose,” he said then, “that A.A. had never published any standard literature—no books, no pamphlets. We need little imagination to see that by now our message would be hopelessly garbled. Our relations with medicine and religion would have become a shambles. To alcoholics generally we would today be a joke and the public would have thought us a riddle. Without its literature, A.A. would certainly have bogged down in a welter of controversy and disunity.” (The Language of the Heart, p. 348)

Throughout A.A. history, whenever the membership has developed a particular concern, a book or newsletter or pamphlet has invariably appeared to give it voice, which is what happened when the landmark book Alcoholics Anonymous was published in 1939.

Up to 1951, however, there was no standardization of A.A. literature until the first General Service Conference recommended that “A.A. textbook literature should have Conference approval”—thus ensuring that the literature has been subjected to the rigors and scrutiny of the committee system, which ever since has protected the integrity of the A.A. message. The subtext of the recommendation, or Advisory Action, as it is now called, emphasizes that no desire to review, edit or censor non-A.A. material is implied: “The objective is to provide, in the future, a means of distinguishing [A.A.] literature from that issued locally or by non-A.A. interests.”

Since 1951 most A.A. literature has been clearly marked “This is A.A. General Service Conference approved literature.” For many years this authentication was accompanied by a logo: a triangle, marked A.A., within a circle carrying the words General Service Conference. Then, in 1994, the Conference recommended that the logo be deleted from the designation, which is how it appears today.

Not to be confused with A.A. Conference-approved literature, which is always produced as the result of Conference Advisory Actions, service material—consisting mainly of information pieces, newsletters, bulletins and A.A. Guidelines—is created in response to members’ expressed need for information on subjects ranging from “Suggested Topics for Discussion Meetings” to a map of A.A. regions in the U.S./ Canada. In the interest of timeliness, service material is updated often to reflect current A.A. experience as well as the latest Conference recommendations.

A.A. service pieces do not go through the Conference approval process because it would be impractical to put regularly updated literature, not to mention monthly and bimonthly publications such as the Grapevine and Box 4- 5-9, through the lengthy Conference-approval procedure. Nonetheless, much of the content in service pieces is excerpted from Conference-approved publications and similarly synthesizes the shared experience of the Fellowship. Like Conference-approved literature and audiovisual material, service pieces may be obtained directly from the General Service Office. (Most of them are free of charge; many are available at various intergroups and central offices, and are also available on G.S.O.’s Web site.)

A.A. Conference-approved material—including the bulk of our books, booklets, pamphlets and audiovisuals— is copyrighted. Local A.A. publications are permitted to reprint the Steps, Traditions, and/or the Concepts, and to quote a phrase, sentence or brief paragraph excerpted from A.A. literature such as the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Conference-approved pamphlets without a prior, written request to do so. When this occurs, the proper credit line should be included to ensure that the copyrights of A.A. literature are protected. After a quotation from a book or pamphlet, the credit line should read: Reprinted from (name of publication, page number), with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

Many groups have found that where and how literature is displayed in the meeting room makes a difference. Is it clearly visible? Can sensitive newcomers pick up some of it readily, without feeling conspicuous? Also, it’s a good idea to separate A.A. Conference-approved material from other publications. Otherwise newcomers and other visitors may pick up a book, pamphlet or newsletter published by an outside source and be wrongly informed about what A.A. is and isn’t. The statement in the Preamble that “A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution... neither endorses nor opposes any causes” may fall on confused ears when people see church, health and A.A. publications all stacked together willynilly. In 1986 a Conference Advisory Action reaffirmed: “The spirit of the 1977 Conference Action regarding group literature displays be reaffirmed and recommended that A.A. groups be encouraged to display or sell only literature published and distributed by the General Service Office, the A.A. Grapevine and other A.A. entities.”

Today all A.A. literature and material may be found in the catalog “Conference-Approved Literature and Other Service Material,” available from G.S.O.—both online (www.aa.org) and off. A.A. service committees working with professionals will find appropriate literature online by clicking on “Information for Professionals” on the A.A. Web site.

In 2001, at an area assembly meeting in Saskatchewan, Canada, G.S.O. staff member Valerie O. spoke about the role of literature in “living the A.A. principles in all our affairs.” “All our literature,” she suggested, “is based on the First Tradition—‘Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on A.A. unity.’ To me, all literature that is the result of group conscience decisions represents the highest form of unity in A.A.... There might be other literature that we have found helpful in recovery, but for the most part A.A. members voluntarily refer only to Conference-approved literature at A.A. meetings. We do this so as not to confuse the newcomer and to pass along A.A.’s message of recovery as we ourselves received it.”