

AL-ANON guidelines

The Shared Experience Of Al-Anon and Alateen Members.

Electronic Al-Anon Meeting Guideline

G-39

Al-Anon Family Groups acknowledge the potential and value of the Internet and other electronic communications media for communicating information about Al-Anon and offering hope and comfort to the families and friends of alcoholics. Al-Anon does not endorse, oppose, or lend support to any on-line service provider or specific communication devices. Al-Anon members taking part in electronic meetings are encouraged to carry Al-Anon's message of hope and comfort to potential members, those still suffering from the impact of someone else's drinking, and the professional community.

WHO CAN START AN ELECTRONIC MEETING?

The actual founding of the meeting and its functions is the responsibility of those qualified for membership. A minister, doctor, social worker, or AA member may *suggest the formation of* an Al-Anon electronic meeting provided that Al-Anon members register then conduct the meetings. **No individual, member or non-member, has the authority to block or screen participants, such actions should only be taken by a group conscience of the meeting members.**

Any two or more relatives or friends of alcoholics who meet to solve their common problem may register as an Al-Anon electronic meeting with the World Service Office (WSO), provided that, as a meeting they have no other affiliation, their meetings are open to all Al-Anon members, and they abide by the Traditions.

WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

The basics needed to start an electronic meeting:

- Determine what type of meeting you want to start.
- Find an internet Service Provider (ISP) or electronic host site.
- Review the *Fact Sheet for Al-Anon Electronic Meetings* (S-60).
- Contact the WSO to obtain An Electronic Meeting Registration/Update Form.
- Select an appropriate name for the meeting.
- Register with the WSO.

WHAT NAME SHOULD WE CHOOSE?

A name that includes the meeting day or a phrase from our program would be inviting to all. A meeting name should not imply affiliation with any other twelve-step group, self-help group, commercial venture, agency, religious group, rehabilitation facility, or other outside enterprise, including the service provider or a Web site location.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO KEEP IN MIND?

- Internet addresses (URLs) and e-mail addresses can be no longer than 40 characters in length.
- **The URL needs to link directly to the meeting page.**
- Please report any changes to your meeting information (e.g. WSO Contact, Current Mailing Address (CMA), meeting day and time, Web site and/or e-mail address immediately to the WSO.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ELECTRONIC MEETING?

Media - Meetings are held via numerous electronic media including on-line and telephone.

Feature- an on-line meeting registers as **one** of the follow: e-mail, chat, or message board. Each meeting may have only one feature.

Type- **Closed** meetings are for all Al-Anon members and potential members; anyone whose personal life is or has been deeply affected by close contact with a problem drinker. In **Open** meetings Al-Anon members tell their stories to anyone interested in the family disease of alcoholism. It is suggested that members avoid discussion or criticism of the alcoholic, gossip, or revealing intimate details of their problems.

ANONYMITY

Members guard the anonymity of everyone else in the fellowships of Al-Anon/Alateen and AA. This means not revealing to anyone -even relatives, friends, and other members- the e-mail addresses, user names or sharings from a meeting.

All of us need to feel secure in the knowledge that nothing shared will be revealed. This includes not copying and forwarding written sharings to others. We feel free to express ourselves among fellow Al-Anon members because we can be sure that what we say will be held in confidence.

CAN WE USE CONFERENCE APPROVED LITERATURE (CAL) IN ELECTRONIC MEETINGS?

Each year, and for that year only, electronic meetings registered with the World Service Office may request permission from Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. to use the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Twelve Concepts, Suggested Welcome, Suggested Closing, and short excerpts (maximum one paragraph) from Conference Approved Literature (CAL) **in text format** in their meetings. Permission to quote from CAL is granted with stated conditions and can be revoked if these conditions are not met.

In the spirit of unity, it is suggested that only Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature (CAL) be used at meetings. The use or mention of outside publications is discouraged.*

* Please see the Policy Digest section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) and the two Al-Anon publications, *Al-Anon Spoken Here* (P-53) and *The Al-Anon Focus* (P-45), for additional background.

CAN WE POST AL-ANON MATERIALS ON OUR MEETING'S WEB SITE?

A list of service materials that may be electronically reproduced can be obtained from the WSO or on the Member's Web site: www.al-anon.alateen.org/members.

IS THERE A SPECIFIC MEETING FORMAT FOR ELECTRONIC MEETINGS?

Electronic meetings use the same meeting format as face-to-face meetings. Only the method of sharing is different. Any Al-Anon related topic may be used for a meeting.

HOW DO WE REGISTER WITH THE WSO?

Write, call, e-mail, or fax the WSO and ask for an Electronic Meeting Registration/Update Form. After the meeting is registered the form for reprint permission is sent to the CMA of the meeting. Reprint permission forms must be submitted annually. **Reprint permission is granted for meetings, not the Web site where the meeting rents the space.**

* **Note: The WSO will register an electronic meeting designating itself as an Al-Anon electronic meeting with the understanding that it will abide by the Traditions and that meetings will be open to any Al-Anon member.**

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM THE WSO?

Registration with the WSO ensures a connection with worldwide Al-Anon. When you register your electronic meeting, you can count on the WSO for the following:

- A folder – in electronic format- filled with information on a variety of subjects such as suggested meeting formats, literature, and service materials. This information can be posted so that it is available for all members
- Access to the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P24/27) on our Member's Web site and service materials to help the meeting thrive and grow.
- WSO newsletters, announcements, WSO Appeal Letters, and other periodic mailings.

- Annual licensing forms are sent to the meeting to renew permission to use the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Twelve Concepts of Service, Suggested Welcome and Closing, and short excerpts (maximum one paragraph) from CAL in the meeting.
- The address of your electronic meeting will be included on the appropriate WSO electronic meeting list.

SEVENTH TRADITION

Our Tradition of self support suggests that the expenses of the meeting's operation be met first. Expenses may include rent (list server), PO box for meeting, and supplies. Remaining funds should be sent to WSO to support Al-Anon and Alateen world-wide. Meetings ought never endorse, finance, or lend their name to outside enterprises, including Web sites.

The following are suggestions from electronic meeting members:

- Members may mail donations to an elected Treasurer.
- Chairperson may request donations by mail at the beginning of the week.
- Members may send donations, with the electronic meeting WSO number or meeting name specified, directly to WSO.
- Members are encouraged to make birthday gift donations to the WSO.
- **Like all Al-Anon meetings, electronic meetings should include a monthly or quarterly Treasurer's report.**

SUGGESTIONS ABOUT NEWCOMERS

- Consider developing a process for welcoming newcomers, and explaining how Al-Anon and your specific electronic meeting work; for example, sending a welcome e-mail to all who register or electing a trusted servant to welcome newcomers.
- Informing newcomers about CAL – members who have never attended a face-to-face meeting and seen the literature table may not be aware that CAL exists.

TRUSTED SERVANTS

The following are service position descriptions shared by electronic Al-Anon meetings. All service positions at an electronic meeting should rotate, just as they do at a face-to-face meeting.

- **WSO Contact** – A regular member of the meeting who can receive postal mail as well as e-mail. The WSO contact receives mail from the WSO and shares it with the meeting.
- **Chairperson/Moderator** – Opens/closes the meeting, introduces topics, and acts as moderator per the meeting format.
- **Greeter** – Welcomes newcomers and responds to newcomer questions about the meeting.
- **Treasurer** – Collects Seventh Tradition donations, maintains meeting funds, pays meeting expenses, reports income/expenses at regular intervals, and reminds members of the need to contribute to the WSO.
- **Secretary or Facilitator** – May keep the meeting list up to date and/or handle any technical matters.