

# AL-ANON guidelines

The Shared Experience Of Al-Anon and Alateen Members.

## Alateen Meetings in Schools

G-5

*This guideline offers tips for Al-Anon members interested in starting an Alateen meeting in a school.*

### SUGGESTIONS FOR REACHING OUT TO SCHOOLS

One way to inform school personnel and students about Al-Anon and Alateen is to hold a meeting on wheels. See: Al-Anon Guideline, Meeting on Wheels (G-22). In addition, information about Al-Anon and Alateen can be presented at:

- faculty workshops
- school assemblies
- individual health, sociology, psychology or religion classes
- articles in school newspaper

One sponsor shared: "Students are oriented to the program in groups. They are more likely to ask questions and pay attention in small, familiar groups. During the presentation, Al-Anon members, as well as Alateen members from other area groups, speak to the students and answer questions. Teachers may be asked to leave during the question/answer portion to assure confidentiality."

### GETTING STARTED

- Identify willing and able Al-Anons and/or Alateens who want to participate.
- Seek guidance and suggestions from the area Alateen Coordinator.
- Contact school personnel (counselor, teacher, principal, nurse, etc.) who can begin the process of forming a group. Present Alateen literature during initial contact. The pamphlet, *Information for Educators – Alateen Meetings in Schools*, (S-64), answers many of the questions that educators ask most often about school Alateen meetings. Also have on hand *A Guide for Sponsors of Alateen Groups*, (P-29) and *Facts About Alateen*, (P-41).
- Ask the school to designate up to two people who can be counted on to insure the anonymity of the students to serve as liaisons with the sponsors.
- Explain our Traditions to school personnel so the group can function within their school guidelines and still remain autonomous.

### FACTS ABOUT ALATEEN FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

#### Membership Eligibility

- Any young person who feels his/her life is or has been affected by someone else's drinking.
- A young person may attend Alateen even if the alcoholic is no longer drinking or no longer lives with the young person.
- Some young people may have their own addictions and criminal records; these do not exclude them from Alateen. However, it is important to remember that Alateen deals with the effects someone else's drinking has had on the teen.
- Alateen is not a program for young people seeking their own sobriety.

#### Types of Meetings

*Closed meetings* are for Al-Anon/Alateen members only: anyone whose personal life is or has been affected by close contact with a problem drinker.

*Open meetings* may be attended by anyone interested in Al-Anon/Alateen.

*Limited Access meetings* are attended by members who meet in locations where our general membership may not be able to attend. School meetings often fall into this category.

### SCHOOL REGULATIONS

*Some schools have a school nurse, teacher, or counselor in an adjoining room during the meeting time. For those schools requiring personnel in attendance, the group could be considered an open meeting, thereby allowing anyone interested to attend.*

*School staff is usually required by law to report certain types of abuse to the appropriate authority. Making members aware of such policies will enable them to make the choice to limit specific details of certain problems and only share feelings.*

*The sponsor provides the school's guidance office (or other appropriate school authority) with the names and phone numbers of the sponsors, district representative, district/AIS Alateen coordinator, area Alateen coordinator, and area delegate (this information can be added to the Al-Anon/Alateen Rolodex card, M-46).*



## SCHEDULING THE MEETINGS AT SCHOOLS

*After school* – Held after classroom activities. Could be open to anyone inside or outside of the school.

*During lunch* – Although students may be available during this period, time limits may impose a hardship.

*Rotating during the school day* – The meeting time rotates weekly so that students don't miss the same class each week. Students would need to follow school procedures regarding permission slips to attend the meeting. The school has the authority to determine whether students may attend. Counselors may require an attendance sheet following each meeting in order to validate absences from regular class. This type of meeting requires greater cooperation with the school personnel.

## PLANNING AHEAD FOR SCHOOL BREAKS

Sponsors of school meetings have a secondary goal of integrating the students into Alateen meetings outside of the school for one very important reason: school breaks. Continued attendance is crucial when school is not in session.

- Find out in advance of school breaks whether or not the meeting can be held at the school.
- Give each Alateen member an Al-Anon/Alateen meeting schedule.
- Make sure the Alateen members have the local AIS phone number, or the WSO toll-free number, for meeting location and times in case it isn't safe for them to have a schedule at home.
- Arrange for an alternative site during school breaks, if possible.

## SELF-SUPPORT

While Alateen groups may need to accept help from a neighboring Al-Anon group in order to get started, their goal should be one of self-support.

- Inform the school administration about the Seventh Tradition and the need to pay rent.
- Money can be collected by passing the basket.
- If the school doesn't accept money, literature can be donated to the library, teachers, or school counselors on a regular basis.

## SPONSORSHIP

Since our program is one of mutual support, the meetings are conducted by the Alateens themselves. Al-Anon members who are at least 21 years old and active in Al-Anon for at least two years may serve as Alateen sponsors. It is recommended that each group have two sponsors. A co-sponsor is invaluable and essential. Co-sponsoring provides continuity, offers a broader perspective of the Al-Anon program, and increases safety. School personnel who are Al-Anon members and meet the criteria stated above may become sponsors of Alateen groups. Alateen group sponsors provide guidance on the Al-Anon/Alateen interpretation of the program. Sponsors should be prepared to:

- Arrive at least ten minutes early.
- Sign in and out in the main office or designated area as required.
- Have a back-up meeting planned. See: *A Guide to Alateen Sponsorship – An Unforgettable Adventure*, (P-86).
- Encourage the Alateen groups to get involved in service, especially at the district and assembly levels.
- Seek guidance, support, and suggestions from the district representative, area Alateen coordinator, and area delegate.

## ANONYMITY

- What is said at meetings, member-to-member or member-to-sponsor, must be kept confidential.
- The meeting room should be physically situated so that it will protect the students' anonymity.
- Alateens protect the anonymity of all members of Al-Anon, Alateen, and AA. Alateen members and sponsors do not divulge another member's sharing to school personnel or others.

## LITERATURE

As in all Alateen meetings, the use of Conference Approved Literature (CAL) is encouraged.

Arrange for a storage space at the school so the literature is always available. Taking literature home for personal use could break anonymity and may create problems for some students.

One sponsor shared: "We found that it is not a good idea to allow the students in the program to bring literature home. We pass out and collect what is used in the meeting, except the Serenity Prayer cards and the wallet size *Do's and Don'ts of Alateen*, cautioning the student to keep them in their wallet."

### **Suggested literature and materials:**

*Alateen - Hope For Children of Alcoholics*, (B-3)

*Alateen – a day at a time*, (B-10)

*How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics*, (B-22)

*Courage To Be Me – Living With Alcoholism*, (B-23)

*Paths to Recovery – Al-Anon's Steps, Traditions, and Concepts*, (B-24)

*Living Today in Alateen*, (B-26)

*Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*, (P-24/27)

*A Guide to Alateen Sponsorship – An Unforgettable Adventure*, (P-86)

*Al-Anon/Alateen Members Interested in Speaking*, (G-1)

*Alateen Safety Guidelines*, (G-34)

*Al-Anon Guidelines For Adults Involved In Alateen Service*, (G-35)

## OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- It is a good idea for sponsors and Alateens to prepare behavior guidelines. They should be flexible and general in tone, but specific enough to inform members *what is and what is not* acceptable behavior during the group meeting.
- It is within the autonomy of the Alateen group to close with whatever prayer the group feels is appropriate. Caution must be used since the school administration could misinterpret closing with a prayer to mean that Alateen is a religious program.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT...

School meetings may be the only way to reach young people who are affected by the drinking of a loved one. It offers another way to be friendly with our friends - professionals in the field of education.

