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## ISSUES FOR MEETINGS

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Each meeting is autonomous in keeping with the ACA Traditions. We use the Traditions to provide guidance to the group in the same way the Steps provide guidance to the individual. The following notes are the results of determining which questions are asked most frequently and the feedback of meetings since the formation of ACA as an independent program on November 10, 1984. Thanks for the input from the independent COA meetings in New York, and from the San Diego, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Phoenix Intergroups.

### LOCATION

A group needs a safe place to meet. For many this means a location free of unnecessary noise, odors, and physical dangers. Usually these groups have found space in churches, schools, hospitals or public service organizations at a very reasonable rent. Some meetings have successfully started in the home of one member of the group, but usually found the need to move into a “neutral space” within a few months. Ultimately, it is up to the members of the group to determine for themselves what kind of space they need.

### GETTING STARTED

It can be difficult to start a meeting where none has existed before. The primary issues are meeting the needs of the fellowship to be served by the meeting. If possible, you may want to get a commitment from two or three other program people that they will show up for a few months to ensure the new group’s early survival. When newcomers show up they need to find a meeting!

### OFFICERS

Each meeting provides opportunities for service in the form of necessary positions to help keep the meeting going. For some there is a need to do too much, but in a healthy meeting several people do a little of the work and each of the jobs gets done. Following are some suggested definitions/tasks of meeting positions – and these are only suggestions – your meeting may find a better way to meet its needs.

**Secretary.** Arrives early. Opens/prepares the room for the meeting. Selects the leader/speaker (usually in advance). Keeps other officers aware of their duties as defined by the group conscience, the Traditions and other resources available to the group. Reminds Treasurer to report to the group on a regular basis, and to make 60/40 contributions to the existing service structure on a regular basis. Passes information between the

meeting and ACA World Service. Conducts business meetings. In the event of an interruption to the meeting and the leader for the meeting being unable to deal with the disturbance, the Secretary steps in to protect the safety of the meeting.

**Literature.** Brings/sets out the literature each week. Keeps an inventory and makes duplicates, or orders literature as necessary. Is responsive to the group for new literature. Presents receipts to the Treasurer for reimbursement for duplication or orders. Orders new literature from the Intergroup or Region or from other Intergroups.

**Treasurer.** Keeps a record of Seventh Tradition collections, expenses and disbursements. Gives a regular report to the group on the state of the finances. Handles 60/40 donations after the group’s expenses and prudent reserve have been met.

Other service positions may be created by the group to meet its needs as they are identified. Service positions are governed by Traditions, particularly our Second Tradition: **“Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern”.**

### REGISTRATION

Our Seventh Tradition states that we are self-supporting through our own donations. After a meeting has met its expenses and provided a “prudent reserve,” usually one to two months’ operating expenses, the remaining funds are divided with 60% going to your local Intergroup or service committee (where one exists) to provide for local services, and 40% going to the World Service Organization which provides services and carries the message on a global basis to the potential newcomer and the community at large. In addition to convening the ABC, WSO provides continued services and support to meetings and Intergroups.

In conducting a business meeting there should be more of an emphasis on obtaining the feeling of the participants, particularly when there is disagreement. The minority voice is important. It is recommended that everyone have the opportunity to voice an opinion on all issues. It is best to start with the members who have some special knowledge of the issue and then go around the room. On sensitive issues, a “group consensus” approach may be used. The “motion” process can be used as a last resort. In the interest of “unity,” it is important, that after understanding the views of the minority, an attempt be made to find an acceptable alternate solution.

There is a principle in Twelve Step programs called “Substantial Unanimity”. “Substantial Unanimity” means that any decision

reached by the meeting be reflective of the will of the entire meeting group, and not the mere result of the majority of those voting. If an agreement cannot be reached, it is best to postpone discussion, or agree to not vote on the issue. This also applies to matters submitted by the Intergroup or WSO.

A portion of the 40% may be used to support a regional service board if one exists and requires your Seventh Tradition donations to carry on its service responsibilities, which provides services over a wide area. It is recommended that the amount not exceed 30%, and that the amount necessary be determined by group conscience.

In areas where there is no regional service structure or an Intergroup, it is suggested that all income in excess of the prudent reserve be sent to the World Service Organization. The Seventh Tradition is the service structure’s only source of financial support. As ACA grows and more meetings support ACA’s service structure through the 60/40 Plan, the more services and benefits we will be able to provide. When sending money to WSO, make checks or money orders payable to ACA WSO. All funds must be paid in U.S. dollars and paid on a U.S. bank.

### MEETING FOCUS

WSO offers sample formats. Each meeting may want to alter the format to suit its needs. Other meetings have made changes that provide for the following:

*Step Study:* As a Twelve Step program, there is a constant need to explore the ways our recovery in ACA is guided by the Steps. Some meetings are a “waltz” (studying Steps 1-2-3, 1-2-3, over and over). Other meeting formats that focus on the steps have included book studies, using the ACA fellowship text, workbook or other Twelve Step literature. Our Literature Policy allows each meeting to make its own determination.

*Writing:* Each member of the meeting writes for 20 minutes on a given topic or one of the Twelve Steps, then what was written is read aloud and shared with the group.

*Sub-Group Meetings:* After opening the meeting together as a large group, the meeting divides into smaller discussion groups to allow everyone the chance to share. The smaller groups may be rejoined at a specific time to close the meeting together, or each small group may end its meeting as they are ready.

*Speaker Meetings:* The leader shares for 10 minutes. Then one or two speakers share for 20–40 minutes each, followed by open sharing, or three speakers form a Panel; each share for 10–

15 minutes for the first half of the meeting and the rest of the meeting is open sharing or question/answer by the Panel. A meeting may create a new format. If you do so, please let the World Service Organization office know so we may share the idea with other meetings.

### CROSSTALK

Most meetings do not allow crosstalk, i.e., each person is allowed to share freely within the agreed-upon time limitation without editorial comment, one-liners, or other interruption from the rest of the group. Meetings say this guideline helps create a safe place to share, and that crosstalk violates the safety of the meeting. The Phoenix Intergroup makes this suggestion to be in a new meeting format:

“In this meeting we do not crosstalk, interrupt or make comments about other people’s statement. We do this for two reasons: first, when we were growing up no one listened to us, they told us our feelings were wrong. Second, as adults we are accustomed to taking care of other people and not taking responsibility for our lives. In this meeting we speak about our own experiences and feelings; we accept without comment what others say because it is true for them, and we work toward taking more responsibility in our lives rather than giving advice to others”.

The fellowship needs to share with one another about the specifics of their individual programs of recovery, but it is strongly suggested that the meetings be the safest place to share and that responses or discussions be over coffee on a one-to-one basis outside the meeting.

### ANONYMITY

Anonymity allows us a new freedom to share our feelings and to experience an identity apart from a label. “What we hear here, who we see here, when we leave here, let it stay here” is a good rule to follow in creating a safe place to share our feelings and recovery without fear of gossip or retaliation.

### LITERATURE

Each meeting has the right to determine the book(s), flyers or pamphlets appropriate to its literature table. In keeping with our Twelve Traditions, it is suggested that the materials from or relating to outside facilities, publishers or enterprises be kept separate from Twelve Step recovery materials, and that other materials not be promoted. Materials not to be promoted are information on outside therapies, workshops, events, etc., particularly when a fee is charged. Literature currently available through the WSO office includes: 25 Questions: Am I an Adult Child?, ACA Essentials, ACA Is..., ACA Sponsorship: Fellow

Travelers, Conducting a Business Meeting, Early History of ACA, Hospitals and Institutions, Hosting an ACA Sponsorship Workshop, Issues for Meetings, Literature Policy, Public Information, Suggested ACA Banking/Accounting Procedure, The Tool Bag, Twelve Concepts for ACA World Service and Suggested Commitment to Service, WSO Is..., To the Beginner In All of Us, The Identity Papers (Paper #1): The ACA Program and How it Works, (Paper #2): The Paradox of Independence, (Paper #3): The Importance of Service in ACA,

The New Meeting Packet is available for a USD \$21.15 donation. It includes the above literature and a model format which may be used or modified by a new or existing meeting.

Additional free literature, including how to start a new meeting, is available on our website:

[www.adultchildren.org/literature.html](http://www.adultchildren.org/literature.html)  
[www.adultchildren.org/foreign](http://www.adultchildren.org/foreign)  
[www.adultchildren.org/non-english-literature](http://www.adultchildren.org/non-english-literature)

### ATTRACTION, NOT PROMOTION

Ours is a program of attraction, not promotion. There is a difference between making the information available and “promoting”. If ACA meetings already exist in your area, you may want to prepare a flyer with information on a new meeting, possibly including a map showing how to get there.

### STARTING A NEW MEETING

Where no meetings exist, a new meeting can be a great service to the fellowship. Where meetings already exist, there may be conflicts on the idea of starting a new meeting. The program grows because someone sees a need and tries to meet that need with a new meeting. This is not a condemnation of existing meetings, but is as a mark of growth of our program.

### RESPECT FOR NEWCOMERS

Newcomers can be particularly vulnerable to emotional, financial and sexual abuses. Some people attending meetings who have now grown beyond their victim/victimizer scripts may attempt to meet their needs through manipulation of newcomers. This is called the “Thirteenth Step” which violates the safety of the meeting and is *not part of our program*. The love and respect we offer to newcomers is a reflection of the love and respect we are learning to offer ourselves. In the words of the first Identity Committee report, “we teach the skills of reparenting through gentleness, humanity, love and respect”.

# Issues for Meetings



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