

NIGHTWATCH
Buffalo Area Intergroup



AFTER HOURS
PHONE MANUAL

Buffalo, NY Central Office
681 Seneca Street
Lower
Buffalo, NY 14210
Phone: 716-853-0388
Website: www.buffaloaany.org

How Nightwatch & the Phone System Work

When someone calls Central Office after hours looking for the hand of AA to be there, they are given options via a computerized telephone menu. If they choose the option to speak to an alcoholic, the Central Office computerized phone system directs the call to 1 of 3 Nightwatch volunteer's private phone. To provide anonymity the volunteer's private phone # is never revealed to the caller.

Each volunteer is called sequentially by the computerized telephone system and given the opportunity to respond to the call via the following format:

- Press 1 to accept the call
- Press 2 to decline the call
- Take no action - after 5 rings the call is directed to the next volunteer

Be Available

If your group does decide to take this commitment, it is a serious commitment! Volunteers need to make every effort possible to answer these calls, what if no one was there to take your call for help!

COMMITMENT & RESPONSIBILITY

Volunteers are a necessary and important aspect of the Central Office. As a volunteer you are representatives of AA. **You are Alcoholics Anonymous to the caller and may be someone's first contact.** The responsibility of our public image for the fellowship often rests in your hands. Volunteering carries with it a commitment to carry out the assigned duties in a responsible fashion and to act in a manner that reflects the attitude of AA. This includes your appearance, your language and your actions.

Actions of this office are governed by the 12 Traditions. We are here to screen & guide people. Your role is to ensure that someone seeking information be directed to where they can receive the help they request. We DO NOT offer our opinions on any issue. If what you are saying cannot be found written in AA literature; **IT IS YOUR OPINION AND DOES NOT BELONG IN THE OFFICE.** We DO NOT 12 step as after hours screeners. You are here to answer the phone and direct the caller appropriately by give meeting locations, other 12 Step contact info (if found on the list of acceptable numbers to be given out) and set up the 12 step call from the list of volunteers provided.

Quick Summary of what we

DO:	and	DON'T DO:
Provide meeting locations		Provide transportation
Provide 12 th Step Contact		Provide temporary “sponsors”
Leave messages for committee members or volunteers		Give out phone numbers of committee members or volunteers
Provide phone numbers for Al Anon, COA, NA, other Central Offices, GSO		Provide phone numbers of clubs, other programs, rehabs, Treatment Centers
Sell Conference approved literature, Grapevine literature and “anniversary” coins.		Sell or provide Hazeldon literature or Drunk Junk
Suggest callers or visitors attend an AA meeting		Give advice, recommend rehab/treatment centers

ANSWERING THE PHONE

FOLLOWING ARE SOME OF THE METHODS EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN TO BE EFFECTIVE IN ANSWERING AA PHONES.

Answering Phones

- A. Proper greeting: “Good morning (afternoon, evening) Alcoholics Anonymous, _____ speaking; how can I help you?”
- B. For meeting information please use the schedule.
- C. There is also a meeting schedule online. Our website address is, www.buffalonyaa.org
- D. If the caller is asking about Alcoholics Anonymous and what it is, simply read them the Preamble and encourage them to go to a meeting to find out for themselves how it works because it is different for everyone. If you start explaining what AA is to you or how it “worked” for you, it may prejudice or deter the caller because they may be in a different place than you.
- E. Some of the most frequent calls to Central Office are from third parties who are concerned about a suffering alcoholic. It is a sad fact, but a true one that there is nothing we can do for such a person. The potential alcoholic him/herself must ask for help. Explain this to the caller and advised that the Central Office number can be made available to the alcoholic or problem drinker. It is often useful to refer a friend or relative of an alcoholic to Al-Anon. *The person requesting the 12 step call needs to be the person who needs help from AA, not someone else calling for the Alcoholic.*
- F. If the person calling wishes for something other than AA MEETING INFORMATION, a 12 STEP CALL, or other information pertaining to AA, please refer them to the phone numbers listed in the book. If the numbers are not listed on the sheet of “ALLOWABLE PHONE NUMBERS” to be given upon REQUEST,” refer them to the phone book.

THIS PHONE LINE IS ALCOHLICS ANONYMOUS. In keeping with the Traditions, please do not give out other numbers or refer anyone to rehabs. Again, we do not give out advice.

Numbers other than what is listed on the posted sheet can be found in the phone book.

- G. We do not give out phone numbers of any volunteer or committee member. We can take a message for the person and have them return the call or we can just leave the message for the person they are trying to reach.
- H. We do not provide rides for members to get to meetings. If someone should ask, thoughtfully explain that we do not provide that service here. Explain that there are people willing to give rides; however, we do not have that information available. Suggest a meeting close by or on a bus route and recommend they ask for help when they get there. DO NOT USE THE 12 STEP LIST to

request rides.

12 STEP CALL: DO NOT TIE UP LINES TRYING TO 12 STEP SOMEONE OVER THE PHONE – THAT IS NOT WHAT WE DO AS AFTER HOURS SCREENERS, WE ARE HERE TO GET THE CALLER IN TOUCH WITH SOMEONE ON THE 12 STEP LIST

Answering calls from sick alcoholics is a key reason for the existence of the Central Office. The volunteer's voice is often the first, and sometimes the only contact a still suffering alcoholic will have with AA. A calm and gentle manner can instill trust in a prospective newcomer. That first call is a difficult one for a problem drinker to make and it may take some time for the person to verbalize his/her purpose for the call.

It is best not to jump to conclusions. If the alcoholic can admit that he has a problem (or may have), perhaps he has begun to take the first step. A little coaxing may be necessary. In any case, patience and tact are essential. A caller may have only a vague idea of his/her desires. Often he/she only knows that he/she is in trouble and recalls that he/she has heard somewhere that AA might be able to help.

Try to get a little background information on the caller so you better assist them.

Ask if they have been drinking and how much. If the caller is obviously very drunk and not willing or able to listen but just wants to talk, suggest that they sleep it off and call back when they awaken. Assure them that someone will be there to answer their call and help them to get started in our program of recovery. (If they insist on talking with someone, line up a 12 step call but be sure to inform the 12 step worker of the circumstances).

Ask if the caller has had any previous contact with AA:

If not, briefly explain that we are a fellowship of alcoholic men and women who help each other and that you can have a sober member return their call to answer any questions and/or concerns they may have.

Explain the procedure:

A sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous will telephone them so they can devote the time and attention the caller needs, you as the screener, cannot tie up the lines. Get the following information:

- (a) Name
- (b) Telephone Number
- (c) Town of Residence

Assure the caller that someone will be contacting them as soon as possible.

1. Consult the 12th Step list;

a.) Look under the town column in which the caller lives. A man is contacted to call a man; a woman is contacted to call a woman.

b.) It may take a number of attempts to reach an available 12th step worker. If you are unable to reach a member on the 12 Step list in the same town or surrounding towns, keep trying until you find someone who is of the same gender as the caller to take the call. Promptness in getting someone to help the caller is vital. **No call should ever be held unanswered overnight.** It is necessary that the volunteer get a firm commitment from the 12th step worker. If you have not been successful in placing the call in the first **15 minutes**, call the person back as reassurance that he or she is not forgotten and someone will call them back soon. Time waiting by the phone can seem endless for the person who may want to drink.

2. Once a 12th step worker is contacted, give the information about the person who called to them.

Treatment

The Central Office sometimes receives calls from sick alcoholics asking about hospitals or detox centers. Our traditions require that we not be affiliated with outside enterprises. We do not give legal, medical, or other professional advice. Sometimes the alcoholic will not know how AA functions. A brief explanation and assurance that AA will be there when the alcoholic is ready may handle the problem quite well.

This means we DO NOT RECOMMEND TREATMENT CENTERS or other SELF HELP GROUPS.

NYS Relay Calls/TTY Communication with the Deaf

If you receive a call from a deaf person, it will be through a TTY operator. The Relay Operator types the hearing impaired person's spoken words to the TTY user and reads back the typed replies.

1. **Incoming:** The operator will serve as both party's "ears", typing what you say to your party and what is typed to you. After you have given the information you wish the operator to type, say "Go Ahead". This lets the operator and the deaf person know that you are done with that part of the conversation and that you are waiting for their reply. When the Operator is reading you their response they will say "Go Ahead". This means it is your turn to talk again. When the caller is finished, the term "ready to hang up" is used. That means the TTY user is ready to hang up and the call is completed for them. Simply say thank you or good-bye and reply with "hanging up now". Then hang up the phone.

2. **Outgoing:** To call someone who is deaf or hard of hearing dial 1-800-421-1220. Give the Operator the area code and phone number of the person you wish to talk to. The Operator will tell you to hold while they contact that person. They will let you know when the person is ready to communicate with you. Do not forget to use "Go Ahead" when you are done with your sentence and "hanging up now" when you are finished with the call.

SPANISH

Some callers, usually Spanish speaking, may not understand English. If there is a volunteer or staff member in the office who speaks Spanish, refer the call to that person. If not try to get the caller's phone number and contact a Spanish Speaking member who can call the person back and assist them if they can.

Here are a few simple Spanish phrases that may help:

English: "Repeat your number very slowly, please"

Spanish: "Repite su numero, mas despacio, por favor"

Pronounced: Ray-pee-tay sue new-mare-o, mas dase-spas-eeoo, pore fav-or

1-Uno (Oono)

6-Seis (Sase)

2-Dos (Dose)

7- Siete (Cee-Yetay)

3-Tres (Trace)

8-Ocho (Oh-Cho)

4-Quatro (Qua-Tro)

9-Nueve (New-Avay)

5-Cinco (Sink-O)

0-Cero (S-Air-O)

List of Acceptable Phone Numbers

AA World Service/GSO: (212)-870-3400

AL-ANON & ALATEEN: (716)-856-2520

N.A.: (716)-878-2316

Crisis Services: (716) 834-3131

Albany/Menands: (518)463-0906 www.aaalbanyny.org

Batavia: (888)854-8322 www.genesee-wyomingcountyyaa.org

Binghamton: (607)722-5983 www.aabinghamton.org

Brooklyn: (718)851-3039 www.brooklynintergroup.org

Catskill: (518)625-2002

Corning: (607)368-9155

Elmira: (607)737-6733 www.aaelmira.org

Geneseo: (585)245-4440 www.livingstonareaintergroup.org

Geneva: (315)789-5955

Ithaca: (607)273-1541

New York: (212)647-1680 www.nyintergroup.org

Niagara Falls: 1-877-270-5303

Old Forge: (315)369-2281

Olean: (716)372-4800

Oneida: (315)533-1227

Rochester: (585)232-6720 www.rochester-ny-aa.org

Syracuse: (315)463-5011 www.aasyracuse.org

Utica: (315)732-6880

Watertown: (315)788-2280 www.aajci.org

AA Preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

3.—Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

5.—Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose—that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

10.—No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues—particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

12.—And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.