

## AA Pamphlets - Keeping our Literature Current

Greetings attendees and facilitators, my name is Angela G., alcoholic from Spokane, Washington. It is an honor and a privilege to present at the 2021 Virtual Pacific Northwest Conference.

The topic I will talk about this afternoon is "AA Pamphlets: Keeping Our Literature Current".

In 2017 an outside firm, Impact Solutions, was commissioned to do an audit of both internal and external communications in A.A. The report on their findings began with this succinct observation of our Conference structure: "Communication is at the heart of A.A.'s mission to extend the hand of recovery from alcoholism to anyone who seeks help. It begins with one alcoholic sharing his or her experience, strength, and hope with another alcoholic. From there, it takes on more forms: group meetings, District committees, Area assemblies—an entire Conference structure that is served by three Boards and two corporations. This "upside-down triangle" is the pathway for A.A.'s communications." Just reading that drives home the complicated nature of our organization and the many pathways communication can take, all to achieve our ultimate goal of extending the hand of recovery from alcoholism to anyone who seeks help – our primary purpose.

Pamphlets were the very first literature of Alcoholics Anonymous. In fact, our organization didn't even bear that name when the first pamphlets were distributed! So the pamphlet has a long and storied history in AA. As most of you are aware our fellowship celebrated 86 years of existence a couple weeks ago. That's nearly nine decades, through a world war, the advent of the digital age and vast changes in society, social structure and norms. As stated in the Preface of our Big Book on p. xi, "Because this book has become the basic text for our Society and has helped such large numbers of alcoholic men and women to recovery, there exists strong sentiment against any radical changes being made in it." We all know that the stories in the back change from edition to edition to reflect the growing and changing demographics over the years. But it can be universally agreed that pamphlets provide a more malleable, adaptable tool of communication to achieve our goal of carrying the message.

The AAWS released a bulletin on January 6, 2020 regarding their Policy on Publication. The excerpt below briefly describes the process:

Scope and Process for Editorial Updates of Conference-Approved Literature

When considering items for revision, the following criteria will guide the editorial process:

- Does the material use outdated language, jargon, or references?
- Does the material utilize the most current science about alcoholism?
- Does the material focus on inclusivity and represent A.A.'s broad diversity?
- Does the material draw on A.A. history in a way that is relevant and necessary?
- Does the material effectively address the audience to whom it is directed? (Target audience input will be sought in the review process)

In order to proactively update the broad inventory of Conference-approved pamphlets and other A.A. Literature in a timely fashion, A.A.W.S. will:

1. Regularly present to the Conference, through the Trustees' Literature Committee or other appropriate trustees' or Conference committee, a selection of pamphlets or other Conference approved Literature items that have been edited or summarized for revision by the Publications Department.
2. The appropriate trustees' or Conference committee, at its discretion, will consider the proposed revision and forward it on to either the appropriate Conference committee for their consideration or to the Conference as a whole for final approval.
3. If approved by the Conference, the Publishing Department will update each item without further change being made other than as may be specified by the Conference in granting its approval.
4. Once the item has been given Conference-approval, the items will be translated, and existing inventory of the prior version will be discontinued and replaced with the new material. The Conference Literature Committee is in a constant state of considering and recommending changes to literature, the majority of those changes occurring within pamphlets.

The best and most current example of keeping our pamphlet literature current can be found in the agenda items for our recent 2021 General Service Conference. Following is a list of 2021 GSC Agenda items as they relate to AA Pamphlets, I will be discussing some of the main points for each item by referring to the background material:

CPC Committee:

1. Consider a request to create a pamphlet for mental health professionals.  
One of the findings of the communications audit mentioned above is that when communicating with professionals it is often most helpful to have material that is specific to a particular profession.
2. Review draft update of the pamphlet "Members of the Clergy ask about Alcoholics Anonymous."  
Majority of the changes updating the terminology from Clergy to Faith Leaders.

Corrections:

1. Consider request for a review of all correction related literature to replace terms such as "inmate" and "offender" with less stigmatizing language.  
Alcoholics and AA members who take meetings in to institutions don't refer to themselves as inmates or offenders, these terms are seen as administrative language. They propose that the AA literature use the terms these AA members use themselves, like "inside AA member" or simply "alcoholic"

Finance:

1. The pamphlet "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix."
  - A. Consider a request regarding contribution percentages to service entities.  
A proposal to get rid of the pie chart in the pamphlet showing the percent contribution examples.
  - B. Discuss mechanization of group contributions.  
Suggesting the pamphlet emphasize the need for groups to really look at how they distribute their 7<sup>th</sup> tradition.

Grapevine and La Vina:

1. Consider a request to develop an AA Grapevine pamphlet on how the AA Grapevine can be utilized to carry the A.A. message.  
Pamphlet to act as another tool to let people know about Grapevine and La Vina.

Literature:

The communications audit found that, in some cases, language or content is insulting to the audience it strives to serve. "As an African American woman, I find it insulting that A.A. has special pamphlets for African Americans and women, as if Blacks and women are special classes of alcoholics who need extra help." —Current A.A. member  
"I was surprised to learn that Hispanics are lumped in with "accessibilities." —Current A.A. member.  
The vast majority of the proposed changes in the literature Committee seek to address these things and change the language within the pamphlets to be more inclusive and use language consistent with societal norms.

1. Consider requests to revise the book Alcoholics Anonymous:
  - a. Add pages 3 through 41 of the pamphlet "The A.A. Group" as an appendix in the next printing.
2. Consider requests to revise text related to open meetings in the pamphlet "The A.A. Group."
3. Consider request to revise text related to self-support in the pamphlet "Frequently Asked Questions About A.A."
4. Consider revising the pamphlet "Questions & Answers on Sponsorship":
  - a. Change the suggestion that sponsor, and newcomer be of the same sex.
  - b. Expand the section on "Service Sponsorship" and retile the pamphlet to include service sponsorship.
5. Consider request to include a G.S.R. preamble in the pamphlet "G.S.R.: Your Group's Link to A.A. as a Whole."
6. Consider updating the pamphlet "A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic."
7. "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated" pamphlet:
  - a. Discuss draft update of the pamphlet "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated."
  - b. Consider not retiring the existing version of the pamphlet "The Twelve Traditions Illustrated."
8. Review the draft update of the pamphlet "Young People and A.A."
9. Review the draft of the new pamphlet on A.A.'s Three Legacies.
10. Review the draft of the new pamphlet for Spanish-speaking women in A.A.
11. Discuss progress report regarding the pamphlet "The Twelve Steps Illustrated."

12. Discuss progress report regarding the pamphlet "The Twelve Concepts illustrated."
13. Discuss progress report regarding the pamphlet "Too Young?"
14. Consider revising the pamphlet, "The A.A. Group," to reflect the importance of the group as a "spiritual entity" as stated in the Long Form of Tradition Five.
15. Consider revising text highlighting service roles at the group level in the pamphlet, "The A.A. Group."
16. Consider updating the pamphlet "A.A. for the Native North American."
17. Review G.S.O. Publishing updates per the A.A.W.S. print policy.
  - a. Review the draft update of the pamphlet, "Is A.A. for You?"
  - b. Review the draft update of the pamphlet, "Is there an Alcoholic in Your Life?"
  - c. Review the draft update of the pamphlet, "Frequently Asked Questions about A.A."
  - d. Review the draft update of the pamphlet, "This is A.A."

Public Information:

1. Discuss Public Information pamphlets.
  - a. Consider revising the pamphlet "Speaking at Non-A.A. Meetings."  
It was determined by the PI committee in 2019 that this pamphlet was disorganized, had unclear language, and lacked vital information. The revised pamphlet will include information about non AA meetings and if our presence helps with our primary purpose, what and how to share about AA, gives a brief outline for a talk, and frequently asked questions by non-AA groups.
  - b. Discuss trustees' Public Information Committee review of P.I. pamphlets

Treatment and Accessibilities:

1. Review progress report on the pamphlet "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic."

In conclusion, the observations of this AA member are that though we are a vast worldwide organization, we consistently strive to grow and learn about our members and more importantly our potential members. Keeping our literature relevant and current is vital to convey our message and efficiently conduct our primary purpose. Our extensive pamphlet library helps to achieve that end and we do a great job of consistently looking at where we can improve. Once again, having learned more about Alcoholics Anonymous and what goes in to the important work we do, I am humbled and grateful to be a part of this miracle of recovery and fellowship.