

# ACCESSIBILITY: WHAT IS IT?

---

HOW ACCESSIBILITY CAN HELP YOUR GROUP CARRY THE MESSAGE TO ALL  
ALCOHOLICS

# ACCESSIBILITY AND THE RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

---

Consider the accessibility needs of the community you live in.

What might be needed to ensure that the hand of A.A. is there for those who might have barriers to accessing the message?

What resources are there for those alcoholics?

How might you need to change how your home group carries the message to reduce or eliminate those barriers?



# GENERAL GUIDELINES

---

Respectful communication is essential to carrying the message. Always talk *to* the person, not to staff or companions.

Person-first language is essential when discussing the needs of people with accessibility challenges. For example, “person who is Deaf” versus “deaf person” or “the deaf”. People are more than their disability!

Ask the person what they need in order to hear the message. Never assume you know what someone needs for support. Like all of us, the person is an expert on themselves!

# THE ALCOHOLIC WHO IS DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

---

Consider the following scenario: a Deaf person walks into your home group and communicates that they are new to A.A. and wondering if American Sign Language interpreters are available for meetings. How would you respond?

- Respectful communication
- Interpreter resources
- Contacting your District Accessibilities chair

# THE ALCOHOLIC WHO IS BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

---

- Braille and audio versions of the Big Book are available via [aa.org](http://aa.org). If assisting the person with purchasing these items, ask the person what they prefer. Not all people with visual impairments read Braille.
- Consider the set up of your meeting space. Is it free of tripping hazards, such as throw rugs? Is there enough space between rows for people to navigate freely?
- How might you help someone access other literature, such as pamphlets and fliers?

# CREATING ACCESSIBLE DOCUMENTS

---

- Create documents with software that has an “Accessibility Checker” (all Microsoft and Adobe products have this)
- Save as a .pdf, or in original format, never as a JPEG or TIF
- Use white or light-colored backgrounds
- Choose “Sans Serif” fonts like Aptos, Calibri, or Arial
- Avoid Serif fonts like Times New Roman and novelty fonts like Comic Sans
- Use 11 point font or larger
- Avoid shading fonts and images
- Use the Accessibility Checker before finalizing your document

# THE ALCOHOLIC WITH MOBILITY ISSUES

---

- Does your meeting space have wheelchair ramps in good working order, and is that entrance always unlocked? Is it obvious when using that entrance where the meeting room is?
- Is your meeting space easy to navigate for those in a wheelchair, using a walker, crutches or a cane? What about the bathroom? Reminder: if your bathroom isn't accessible, neither is your meeting.
- What seating options are available in your meeting space? Are there cushioned chairs, or is it exclusively folding chairs?
- Respectful communication with someone in a wheelchair includes crouching down so you're eye level with that person, speaking in at a normal volume, and directly to that person instead of to anyone who might be assisting them. Reminder: using a wheelchair doesn't mean that someone also has an intellectual disability or cognitive issue.

# THE ALCOHOLIC WHO IS HOMEBOUND

---

- Bringing a meeting into someone's home versus Zoom
- Ask if the person would like for you and anyone coming into the home to wear a mask. If someone is chronically ill or immunocompromised, catching an illness from a visitor could hospitalize the person.
- Providing rides: make sure you have enough room for the person and any mobility devices they may use, such a walker or wheelchair
- Give yourself extra time if transporting, to allow for helping the person in and out of the vehicle, into the meeting room, and so forth.



# THE ALCOHOLIC WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY (ID) OR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

---

- People with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorders are adults and should be treated as such. Never talk to someone with ID or ASD like they're a child, as being "talked down to" can greatly damage their impression of A.A.
- A common misconception is that someone with ID "has the mentality of a (3, 5, 10, etc.) year old". The reality is that people with ID have difficulties with how they think and communicate, but this does *not* mean they have the brains of children. They are still adults with life experience and very often, extensive trauma histories.
- People with ID and ASD, like anyone else, can quickly assess what you think of them. Respectful communication is essential.
- Use concrete language, and avoid metaphors or figures of speeches. Check in with the person to make sure what you're sharing with them makes sense.

# ALCOHOLICS AS PARENTS OR CAREGIVERS

---

- How do group members react when children are present at meetings?
- How are parents treated if the child starts to struggle with behaviors?
- What support do group members offer to the parent who needs to hear the message?
- Consider the alcoholic who is a caregiver to someone who is elderly, chronically ill, or who has an adult child with a disability. How can your group support that person?

# ALCOHOLICS IN REMOTE OR UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

---

- What can your group do to carry the message to these communities?
- What existing resources can be accessed to help the hand of A.A. to be extended to them?
- How might another A.A. meeting or group get started in those areas?

# THE ALCOHOLIC WITH LIMITED OR NO READING ABILITY

---

- Audio versions of the Big Book for the alcoholic who struggles with reading
- Reminder: when asking people to read during a meeting, people may not be able to read or struggle to do so. If they pass or refuse when asked to read How It Works, for example, attempting to force them to do with, for example, reminders that “we don’t say no to A.A.”, could be very embarrassing for that person.
- If someone comes to you and asks for help with learning to read, offer to help connect them to a free literacy class, or contact your district Accessibilities chair

# QUESTIONS

---

Contact information

[accessibility@maineaa.org](mailto:accessibility@maineaa.org)