

Alcoholics Anonymous Area 53
Public Information and Cooperation
With the Professional Community
Committee

Spring 2009 Workshop

Introductions

- Please give us your name, Home Group, Sobriety Date, and service interests

Current Projects

- Talks at schools
- Manning a booth at Health Fairs (yes we're still anonymous-at the level of press, radio & film)
- Putting together a team to man a booth at the annual North American Mennonite conference

High Priority Projects We Hope to Get to Soon

- Develop a relationship with Probation and Parole Departments as we expect a lot more interaction with them over time
- Investigate IOP programs (outpatient treatment to the extent that we are not overlapping with TFC)
- Interaction with the Medical Community

First Things First

- This work is not for newcomers, but all are welcome to come and learn more,
- This is about building relationships with non-alcoholics who deal with people who need us,
- We may be the only Big Book somebody sees, so we need to be well informed and clear about what we are trying to do, and
- There aren't many successful models of PI/CPC work out there-we hope to create one

A Little History

- Public Information (PI) has been around since 1961
- Cooperation With the Professional Community Committee (CPC) has been around since 1971
- These committees have overlap and are often merged when small

PI History

The publication of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* was the first AA information available to the public. By 1941, several articles in national publications helped to encourage understanding and acceptance of AA.

The Public Information Committee of the General Service Board was formed in 1956 with a corresponding conference PI committee formed in 1961.

POLICY (as established by the General Service Conference)

"In all public relationships, A.A.'s sole objective is to help the still suffering alcoholic. Always mindful of the importance of personal anonymity, we believe this can be done by making known to the still suffering alcoholic, and to those who may be interested in their problem, our own experience as individuals and as a fellowship in learning to live with alcoholism.

We believe that our experience should be made available freely to all who express sincere interest. We believe further that all efforts in this field should always reflect our gratitude for the gift of sobriety and our awareness that many outside of A.A. are equally concerned with the serious problem of alcoholism."

As nonprofessionals, we do not give any information concerning the general subject of alcoholism. "We must recognize that our our competence to speak about alcoholism is limited in subject matter to Alcoholics Anonymous and it's recovery program."

QUALIFICATIONS FOR PI WORK

- * Sound sobriety with a knowledge of the AA program of recovery
- * Ability to provide consistent, accurate information about the fellowship
- * Understanding of the 12 Traditions with a firm grasp in particular, of the anonymity traditions
- * Commitment, as you will be the face of AA to the outside world. If we make a promise, we keep it!!

BASIC COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

- * Educate committee members about basic PI information, how to give presentations at non AA meetings and how to staff an AA booth
- * PI visits to schools, local businesses, church and civic groups
- * Staffing AA Booths at community health fairs/ conventions
- * Providing displays of AA literature to be placed in public areas (libraries, schools, hospitals, church literature racks) in cooperation with the responsible individuals
- * Provide AA listings in local phone books

Cooperate with the media by:

- 1) Distributing copies of A.A.'s letter of anonymity
- 2) Distributing information about AA open meetings and conventions to local newspapers
- 3) Providing public service announcements (PSAs) and AA videos to local radio and TV stations

Perform PI work within the AA fellowship by:

- 1) Building an understanding of the 12 Traditions
- 2) Providing local AA members with reports on all PI activities
- 3) Visiting local AA groups to give brief talks about PI service
- 4) Setting up PI workshops at Assemblies, Conventions and Conferences
- 5) Maintaining the Area 53 website

SOME GOALS OF PI COMMITTEES

- * Be sure every public library has at least one conference approved book (Big Book, 12 & 12, Living Sober)
- * Place literature racks in high schools, libraries, police stations, hospitals (after checking with appropriate personnel) and keep stocked with current literature and meeting schedules
- * List open AA meetings in the newspaper
- * Send letters of introduction to local schools, nursing homes and churches offering to provide literature or to make a presentation
- * Respond to speaking requests at non AA meetings within your area/district
- * Place PSAs with local radio and television stations
- * Place a current meeting schedule with every hotel and B&B in your area
- * Place a small (paid, if necessary) announcement in the local paper during the holidays
- * Start a Traditions meeting in your district

CPC Background

- CPC split off from PI in 1970, and
- CPC really took off in the mid 1970s

...Anybody know why?

CPC Background, continued

- Treatment Centers were popping up, were hiring AA people to work in them, and often they were advising non-alcoholic clients to go to AA meetings with no understanding of “open” or “closed”
- There was increasing unrest out in the groups as court-ordered attendees began to show up
- Clearly, we needed to work on communication with our professional friends

What Was Our Response?

There was much discussion at the GSCs and we came up with some suggestions for how the groups might survive and benefit from the changes:

1. Study the 12 Traditions in the home groups,
2. Have a group representative on the CPC committees, or start one,
3. Get to know the people who are sending people to AA meetings, and
4. Hold workshops at every level of AA service

By the way...these recommendations were made in 1976

So what are we trying to do in 2009?

- Encouraging the groups to study the traditions and the pamphlets,
- Encouraging groups to form committees or send people to the Area 53 PI/CPC Committee (or both),
- Encouraging the membership to help us get to know the people who are sending people to AA meetings, and
- Holding the first of what will hopefully be many workshops

Just So We're Clear...

- First and foremost, nobody tells an AA Group what it must do-ever.
- Every group has the right to do what it thinks is best. This is autonomy.
- We just hope to get the groups thinking about PI and CPC and hopefully they will send along bodies and ideas

Suggested Required Reading

- Twelve Traditions (Illustrated, 12x12, AA Comes of Age Unity section)
- Problems Other Than Alcohol
- The AA Group
- Speaking at non-AA Meetings
- How AA Members Cooperate with other Community Efforts to Help Alcoholics
- Related guideline sheets (Yellow Sheets)

More Suggestions for Reading

- Understanding Anonymity
- Individual workbooks, PI or CPC or both (these are not hard reads, nor are they lengthy)

A Sample Problem

- Clients of a center for troubled youth are being sent to three AA meetings a week by their case officers
- By the way, Oxycontin is the apparent “drug of choice”
- What would be an appropriate way to address this?

Sample Problem Continued

- We should send a well informed AA member or two to get to know the case officer and talk with him about what we are and what we aren't
- We could talk to the local groups that have open meetings and let them know that we would like to funnel the non-alcoholic clients away from closed meetings

Sample Problem Continued

- We could hold an orientation meeting for clients who are about to be sent to us, this would be an informational session, not an AA meeting, and could be held at a community center or other neutral site
- We could provide the center with AA literature and cut-down meeting schedules that list only open meetings that have agreed to welcome the clients

Sample Problem Continued

- Open meetings could be started if there aren't enough of them around
- Such meetings could be centered around leads or the Guide to Leading Beginners Meetings
- The meeting could be a service project for the PI/CPC committee or a local outreach committee

Sample Problem Continued

- Such meetings, of course, would welcome anybody interested in AA, so a nursing student could come there and get information, or a wife or an employer.
- Probationers might also benefit from such a meeting
- A stamp could be created to process the slips for the attendees, getting us out of the signature business

Sample Problem Continued

- Papers could be stamped before the meeting, so there is no holding people for an hour against their will (when we do that that we are no longer meeting as equals)
- Over time, if the courts would agree, they could provide the space, we could provide the speakers and literature, and they could process the slips (this is the Denver model). Note that the Colorado CPC Committee arrived at this after years of hard work.

Mildly Interesting Side Notes

- Osteopathy doctors see a lot of us because we fall a lot and we break bones. Should we be talking to these folks about AA? What about DO medical students?
- Turns out people who drink too much have poor judgment...we have ten times the incidence of venereal diseases. More fertile ground (no pun) for PI and CPC?

CPC Conclusion

- All or none of these ideas may be helpful to you
- These ideas come from areas where the AA groups had the same types of problems we have today, and they solved those problems by studying the traditions, sharing ideas and getting into action-see the workbook for more particulars
- There are more than problems here: there are opportunities to clarify our message, set a good example for future AA members, and help more alcoholics. We might even stay sober doing it.

Conclusion

- So far we've talked about some good ideas that have worked elsewhere, but
- These are not rules!
- Just as every AA group has the right to be wrong, every locality has to find a method that works for it.