

Suggestions to professionals for making an effective referral to AA

Prepare to make the referral

1. Attend two OPEN AA Meetings: experience-based referral

The best way to refer an alcoholic to AA is from personal experience by attending an OPEN AA meeting. Anyone may attend an OPEN meeting; only persons with an alcohol problem may attend a CLOSED meeting. For a current printable meeting schedule of the Durham area, visit <http://www.aanc32.org/s/MeetingList201711282017.pdf>.

The professional will learn what really happens in a meeting and will then be referring based on personal experience. This gives the professional immediate credibility.

The alcoholic will know that the professional has done what he or she is being asked to do!!

2. Obtain literature: meeting schedule, *AA at a Glance*, *Is AA for You?*

Pick up some AA literature at the meeting for the alcoholic, or download from the internet. Three suggested pamphlets:

A local meeting schedule <http://www.aanc32.org/s/MeetingList201711282017.pdf>

AA at a Glance https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/f-1_AAataGlance.pdf

Is AA for You? https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/p-3_isaaforyou.pdf

Keep a supply of this information available for the alcoholic! Most local groups make the pamphlets available to professionals at no cost. A supply of pamphlets is also available at the local intergroup office at a nominal cost, or contact cpcpi@aanc32.org to obtain pamphlets.

3. Get a personal AA phone number if possible

At the meeting, get the name and phone number of an AA member to give to alcoholics. You may already know an AA member; if so they would be glad to be a resource. For individual alcoholics, AA urges gender specific referral of local contacts: men helping men, women helping women. By giving them personal contact information, it is more likely they will go. Talking with a fellow alcoholic is a key part of the AA program. Just suggesting that an alcoholic go to a meeting almost never works. The denial is too great.

Refer the alcoholic to AA

1. Talk to the alcoholic about AA

Give them the literature and local contact phone number if available, then ENCOURAGE THEM TO GO TO AN AA MEETING. Tell them about your experience, explain what to expect and urge them to call the AA member to meet them at a meeting or to take them to a meeting! Some individuals with a drinking problem do not identify as an alcoholic, but anyone with a drinking problem is welcome to attend an AA meeting.

2. Give the alcoholic the AA Helpline number: 919-783-6144

Encourage the individual to call the Helpline number. This phone call will directly connect with a recovering alcoholic member of AA. The individual can ask any question and talk to someone at length about their alcohol problem. For those new to AA, this tends to reduce anxiety about attending their first meeting.

3. Explain types of AA meetings: open, closed, formats

Anyone may attend an open meeting; persons with an alcohol problem may attend either open or closed meetings. Meetings have various formats: speaker, literature, discussion. Help them decide which meeting to attend. However, it's more important to just start attending meetings than to worry too much about which type of meeting to go to.

4. Discuss potential consequences

As the alcoholic's 'trusted' professional, discuss the consequences of continuing drinking and not getting help. For each professional, the issues discussed may differ, but stress the progressive nature of the illness: health, financial, employment, relationship and legal consequences.

Most organizations today have well defined policies regarding both the process and options/consequences for employees with an alcohol problem.

5. Follow-up: ask for a report back

The professional's personal relationship will often make a difference in encouraging the alcoholic to seek help and it is important to FOLLOW-UP. Be sure to ask about the alcoholic's experience in AA and encourage them to continue to get help. Just knowing that you are interested and will be following up may be the motivation needed to find a way out of the living hell of alcoholism.

These are suggestions, and most professionals will not have time to do all of them. Use as many as practical in each situation. They may just save the alcoholic's life.