

Suggestions for 12th Stepper Volunteers

The following Q-and-A offers some suggestions for 12th Stepper volunteers who are uncertain about their responsibilities when they call a prospect who has contacted the Central Office. These are suggestions only; they are in no way prescriptive. As the saying goes, take what you need and leave the rest.

1. How does the Central Office decide which 12th Stepper to call?

The Central Office has a list of men and women who are willing to take 12th-step calls. The Central Office will not give your number to a prospect. Instead, the Central Office will tell the prospect that an AA member will call them. The Central Office will then call people on the 12th Stepper list looking for a 12th Stepper willing to call the prospect.

If you agree to call the prospect, the Central Office will give you the prospect's name and phone number and any pertinent information obtained from the prospect. AA women are contacted to respond to women; AA men are contacted to respond to men.

Calls come into the Central Office from all parts of Arkansas. Which 12th Stepper gets called often comes down to location, but that's never perfect. The more rural, the harder it is to find a 12th stepper. The Central Office puts a date by the last time you were asked to make a 12th-step call. Even then, you may be called based on necessity. Sometimes, others are not available, or you just may be the only person in a 20- to 30-mile radius.

2. What if I am unable to call the prospect when the Central Office calls me?

If you are unable to call a prospect when the Central Office calls, tell them that. The Central Office will then call another 12th Stepper on the list. Just say, "I can't do it, please find someone else today." Some 12th Steppers pass it on to another trusted friend in the program, and that's OK.

3. How soon should I call the prospect?

We recommend that you call the prospect immediately or as soon as possible. Usually, the Central Office will tell the prospect that it may be a few hours, but the delay is the time spent finding someone in certain areas. If it's going to take more than an hour let the Central Office know that another 12th Stepper should be called.

4. What if I don't want the prospect to see my phone number on his or her caller ID?

You may temporarily block the caller ID by dialing *67 followed by the prospect's number. The prospect's caller ID will read Private Number.

5. What do I tell the prospect when I call?

When you call, make sure the person who answers is the person who made the call to AA. Give the prospect your first name, tell them that you are a member of AA, and ask how you can help them. As you talk with the prospect, keep in mind that the conversation is really just about one alcoholic talking to another alcoholic, sharing his or her experience, strength, and hope.

The Central Office volunteer may have at least some background information on the prospect you are calling. Just say something like, "Hey this is Matt. The AA Central Office said you called and you are new to AA (or new to the area), so I'm happy to tell you anything you want to know about AA." Find out as much as possible about the prospect's situation. Try to let them take the lead. Ask what they need and go from there.

Identify with the prospect, commiserate, talk about the Big Book, about how it worked for you, talk about how you saw that it was working for others. Sometimes, the volunteer who calls you doesn't have a full knowledge of the prospect's condition when they call you. It's important to identify or qualify the prospect as soon as possible and to get them the help they need (i.e., NA, CA, Al-anon, and Suicide Hotline).

6. What about meeting the prospect?

Try to meet the prospect at a meeting and try to take another AA member with you. If the prospect wants to meet away from a meeting ask another AA to come with you and agree to meet in a public place such as a fast-food restaurant or similar place. Avoid - strongly - meeting at the prospect's home. Also, you may want to take a newcomer packet and/or a copy of the Big Book to leave with the prospect.

7. Does a prospect need to be detoxed?

We are not medically trained to know. That is for the prospect to decide and they may want a Doctor's advice. We do know that detoxing can get severe and life threatening. Any emergency room will detox someone with or without insurance. They do bill you for the treatment. If you let them know you need to go to treatment after detox the hospitals have social workers that should help you find a treatment facility.

8. What if the prospect wants to go into treatment?

Most treatment centers won't take anyone until they are detoxed. Some treatment centers, but very few, will detox someone. If they just want a treatment center phone number suggest that he or she look in their phone book or search the Internet for a treatment facility. The Central Office tries to maintain a list of treatment centers. Virtually all treatment centers cost something. Tell the prospect they need to be sure their insurance company will work with the treatment center they choose. We don't know anything about any treatment center. We do not recommend a particular treatment center but if you went through treatment share your experience.

Remember, the AA program has worked for millions of people. Once a person is detoxed, if needed, then they can begin the AA program. As long as they will take the action suggested they can stop drinking and become happy, joyous and free.

9. What do I do if the prospect has no transportation?

The first rule of thumb is that AA is not a taxi service. You are not obligated to provide a ride to meetings or treatment centers or any other place the prospect wants to go. However, the Central office has a list of people that will give a ride to their first meeting. Remind the prospect that they can get to a meeting by walking, bus, Uber, and taxi or whatever method they have used to get around. Once they are at the meeting they may find a ride home.

10. What do I tell the prospect if he or she has been in the AA program before?

If the prospect has been in AA before, he or she may know as much about AA as you do. Maybe more. Ask what he or she needs. Find out more. Did the prospect work the steps? Did it work for them before, and do they think it will work this time? Tell them (briefly) how it worked for you.

11. What information is available at the AA Central Office or on the AA GSO website that offers general guidelines for providing information about the AA program?

Pamphlets of every kind are available online at aa.org or arkansascentraloffice.org. Printed literature, including newcomer packs, are in the racks at the Central Office. There is also an event/flyer/information wall at the Central Office.

12. How long should I talk to someone who is clearly very drunk during the call?

There is no definitive answer to this question, but the quick answer is: not long. We suggest that you give it 10 minutes or so. If the prospect becomes argumentative, or if you end up in a lot of circular discussion, offer to call the prospect later.

13. What should I tell the prospect if he or she asks about special groups for doctors?

These groups do exist, but the contact information is restricted. Tell the prospect to contact the AA Central Office during normal business hours (M-F) to be referred to one of these groups.

14. Should I follow up in the following days?

The simple answer is yes. The best way to help the person be successful in AA is to call in the next day or two and see how they fared in their first meeting. Encourage them to take the action and not stop until the miracle happens. Help them find a sponsor (or yourself) to help them through the steps.

There is a special satisfaction that comes from helping someone get started in AA.

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