

X.

**TREATMENT &
ACCESSIBILITIES**

AGENDA

Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities

Monday, April 24, 2023, 9 a.m. – Noon

Room: TBD

Chair: Grace F.

Secretary: Misha Q.

Conference Committee Members

Panel 72

Grace F.*

Darin H

Tracy M.

Sherry S.**

Panel 73

Judy C.

Jon C.

Tom F.

Douglas S.

*Chair

**Alternate Chair

- ◆ Discussion and acceptance of trustees' Committee report.
- A. Review progress report on update to the pamphlet "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic—Never too Late."
- B. Review progress report on Military audio interviews.
- C. Review contents and format of Treatment Kit and Workbook.
- D. Review contents and format of Accessibilities Kit and Workbook.
- E. Consider request to do an Accessibilities Inventory of Alcoholics Anonymous throughout its services and structure.
- F. Discuss carrying the message to alcoholics with intellectual or information processing challenges, communication challenges and diverse neurological abilities.

NOTE: 1989 Conference Advisory Action

Each Conference Committee carefully consider their agenda items and strive to make their recommendations for Advisory Actions to the Conference at the policy level. To be more financially responsible, when a Conference Committee recommendation involves a substantial expenditure of money, an estimate of cost and its impact on the budget be part of that recommendation.

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- G. Review progress report on Bridging the Gap Workbook and other service materials.
- H. Review progress report on update to the pamphlet, "Bridging the Gap."
- I. Review progress report on G.S.O.'s Guidelines for Remote Communities.

NOTE: 1989 Conference Advisory Action

Each Conference Committee carefully consider their agenda items and strive to make their recommendations for Advisory Actions to the Conference at the policy level. To be more financially responsible, when a Conference Committee recommendation involves a substantial expenditure of money, an estimate of cost and its impact on the budget be part of that recommendation.

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2023 Conference Committee on Treatment/Accessibilities

ITEM A: Review progress report on update to the pamphlet “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic—Never too Late”

Background notes:

From the 2021 Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Treatment/Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed the progress report on the pamphlet “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic” and requested that a draft pamphlet or progress report be brought to the 2022 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

From the August 1, 2021, trustees’ C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee chair assigned committee members to review the compiled stories and identify the top three and four submissions for the pamphlet “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic.” The committee asked the secretary to distribute the matrix and background. The committee agreed to discuss their selections at their October 2021 meeting.

From the October 31, 2021, trustees’ C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee discussed the update to the pamphlet “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic.” The committee discussed the subcommittee review of the 42 submitted stories and agreed to a first-round selection of seven of the stories to be considered for the updated version of the pamphlet.

The committee agreed to continue the review of stories for the pamphlet update. The committee requested that the staff secretary make a compilation of stories to include: the seven stories selected from the most recent submissions, the stories submitted for the update in 2019, stories from the September 2014/ August 2021 issue of the AA Grapevine magazine, and the stories that are in the existing version of the pamphlet “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic.”

The committee requested that the staff secretary forward the compilation to committee members for their continuing review and discussions at the January 2022 meeting.

From the January 30, 2022, trustees’ C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee reviewed and discussed the progress report from the subcommittee on the pamphlet “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic -- Never Too Late.” The committee

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performed the first-round review of 84 stories and selected 23 stories to be part of a second-round review. The goal of the second round is to select the top 12 stories. The committee agreed to forward to the 2022 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities the 12 stories to review and identify any gaps in the targeted categories of the older alcoholic experience. The committee looks forward to the Conference committee's feedback.

From the 2022 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities Committee Consideration:

The committee discussed and accepted a progress report on the development of a revision to the pamphlet "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic." The committee requested that the trustees' Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee keep the following suggestions in mind:

- Include stories of only those who found recovery from the age of 60 years or older.
- Form a working group to help gather sharing from A.A. members who found recovery after age 60.
- Consider who is the target audience.
- Conduct a broader call out for stories through multiple distribution methods.
- Include stories of senior alcoholics with health issues, are hard of hearing, are immigrants, and have experience in finding recovery or barriers to online meetings.
- Consider a new format for the pamphlet that is more accessible, noting that the current foldable format is challenging to open and navigate pages for those who may have dexterity challenges.

The committee also provided additional notes on gaps in the stories to the committee secretary to be forwarded to the trustees' Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee.

The committee requested that a progress report or draft pamphlet be brought to the 2023 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

From the July 31, 2022, trustees' C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee agreed with the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities' consideration, which noted gaps in reaching the goals for relevant content to be included in the pamphlet's eventual collection of stories. The chair appointed an "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic" working group. Working with the staff secretary, the group will focus on developing an expanded range of stories from A.A. members who found recovery after the age of 60. The committee looks forward to a

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progress report at the October 2022 meeting.

From the October 30, 2022, trustees' C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee discussed a progress report from the working group on the draft update to the pamphlet, "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic — Never Too Late." The working group reported there have been several efforts to encourage submissions which resulted in forty-seven new stories. The goal is to finalize the selection of eight stories that meet the inclusion criteria requested within the 2022 C.P.C. Committee Consideration. There was a discussion about addressing format concerns. The committee concluded that the value of having the large print format suitable for those with low vision is a necessity. The committee remained open for any future publishing format ideas that will improve dexterity challenges. The working group agreed to provide final story selection to the staff secretary by November 14, 2022. The committee looks forward to a final draft or a progress report at the January 2023 meeting.

From the January 2023, trustees' C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee reviewed the final report from the Working Group on the A.A. for the Older Alcoholic. There was a discussion of the content of the draft pamphlet and the working group shared their process for evaluating and selecting stories.

A concern was raised about a story from a newly sober member being included in the pamphlet. The committee agreed that the story carried the message effectively and should be retained.

A question was raised about the length of the draft pamphlet, and if the length may cause for it to be too bulky to fit in local group's pamphlet racks. The committee requested the staff secretary to update the report to include the word count information.

The committee **agreed to forward** to the 2023 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities the "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic – Never too Late" report and draft pamphlet.

Background:

1. Progress report – "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic"
2. Revised pamphlet "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic—Never too Late" (*for committees' eyes only*)

**2023 Trustees' Treatment and Accessibilities Committee
Working Group on "AA for the Older Alcoholic – Never too Late"
Progress Report: January 29, 2023**

Subcommittee: David S., chair, Clint M., Misha Q., secretary

Scope: The chair appointed an "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic" working group comprised of David S., project lead, and Clinton M. Working with the staff secretary, the group will focus on developing an expanded range of stories from A.A. members who found recovery after the age of 60. The committee looks forward to a progress report at the October 2022 meeting.

Introduction: At the April 2022 meeting of the General Service Conference, the committee on Treatment and Accessibilities reviewed stories selected for an update of the pamphlet "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic – Never too Late." The committee identified gaps in the selection of stories that were presented. The committee asked the staff secretary to provide their comments to the trustees' committee on CPC/T-A for review at their July 2022 meeting.

The committee discussed and accepted a progress report on the development of a revision to the pamphlet "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic." The committee requested that the trustees' Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee keep the following suggestions in mind:

- Include stories of only those who found recovery from the age of 60 years or older.
- Form a working group to help gather sharing from A.A. members who found recovery after age 60.
- Consider who is the target audience.
- Conduct a broader call out for stories through multiple distribution methods.
- Include stories of senior alcoholics with health issues, are hard of hearing, are immigrants, and have experience in finding recovery or barriers to online meetings.
- Consider a new format for the pamphlet that is more accessible, noting that the current foldable format is challenging to open and navigate pages for those who may have dexterity challenges.

Additional suggestions: The gaps noted above were communicated to the trustees' CPC TA Committee in the form of a grid in which the Conference Committee laid out the demographics of those who had been included in that draft of the pamphlet "A.A. for the

Older Alcoholic.” They noted how many of the eleven stories fell into the categories of male/female, gender non-conforming or transgender, diverse ethnic backgrounds, being gay, lesbian, or bisexual, having gotten sober later in life, being a veteran, having mobility issues, mental health problems or experience with dementia or Alzheimer’s. They also looked to see which stories focused on a spiritual solution.

The suggestions that came out of the 2022 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities highlighted some additional gaps, including: not a lot of recovery in some stories, but with the caveat that some of these stories had other positive attributes like a great ending or a nice focus on Experience, Strength and Hope. There seemed to be an over-representation of stories by lesbians, and possibly a lack of ethnic or racial diversity. The committee felt that the stories that were presented in 2022 would not be an effective way to reach the newcomer and suggested that there should be more sharing on digital meetings.

The committee requested that a progress report or draft pamphlet be brought to the 2023 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

Work completed to date –the AA for the Older Alcoholic Working Group: In July 2022, the trustees’ CPC/TA Committee created a working group charged with updating the pamphlet “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic—Never too Late.”

Working with GSO Staff, the “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic” Working Group put out a series of calls for sharing from the Fellowship including three requests direct to the fellowship complemented by personal outreach to all Delegates and Regional Trustees. The call specifically asked for stories from members who got sober after the age of 60.

More than 50 stories were received.

Members of the working group carefully read and evaluated each story, specifically looking for stories that would carry a strong A.A. message of hope and recovery, and which would address the suggestions made by the 2022 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities. The working group created a grid for evaluating stories using those suggestions.

In addition, the Working Group sought to consider whether stories from the existing pamphlet “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic” should be retained.

The Working Group also considered stories that had been published in the AA Grapevine.

In the end, a total of 56 stories were considered, including previously collected stories,

previously published stories and new stories. While the Working Group endeavored to select stories that would reflect the diversity of experience as suggested by the Conference Committee, the Group sought to achieve balance between the overall experience, strength and hope of a story and the breadth of the fellowship.

Over a series of meetings, the Working Group narrowed the story selection to eight and worked with GSO staff to have them edited for clarity.

The Working Group worked with GSO staff to update the introductory text of the pamphlet.

The Working Group also hoped to revise the back pages of the pamphlet in order to ensure that that readers of “AA for the Older Alcoholic” would easily find other helpful resources, in particular other conference-approved literature available in large print. A suggestion was made to add a QR code to the pamphlet, which could direct users to large-print material. It was also observed that using a QR Code to point readers to electronic resources would allow readers to enlarge pdfs with their own electronic devices, thus making most Conference-approved literature available to those with vision impairments. However, the Publishing Department indicated that they are still evaluating the use of QR codes at this time and are not ready to add them to pamphlets.

Working Group recommendation: The Working Group suggests that once this QR Code piloting and evaluation is complete, staff consider adding a QR code to pamphlet “AA for the Older Alcoholic” which directs users to other helpful resources, perhaps as a stand-alone web page or as a link to the forthcoming “AA is for Everyone” project.

January 24, 2023, GSO Staff note: The content of the pamphlet has been copyedited (see background item TA-A, Doc.2) and a layout has been created with various cover art. The Trustees’ Committee on CPC/TA Working Group has asked if the Publishing department could provide them with different cover art that keeps in mind anonymity and diversity.

The Publishing department is also looking into pricing and design possibilities, like paper, size, folding, etc. in response to the 2022 Conference Committee consideration that requested new formatting be considered.

February 2, 2023, GSO staff note: In response to a request made in the January 29, 2023, trustees’ CPC/TA committee meeting, GSO staff conducted a word count comparison. Word count for the new draft of “AA for the Older Alcoholic –Never too Late” is 16,178. Word count for the 2018 version is 8,899 words.

ITEM B: Review progress report on Military audio Interviews

Background notes:

From the 2021 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities Committee Consideration:

The committee reviewed the progress report on audio interviews with A.A. members who are in the Armed Forces and made the following suggestions:

- Move forward with the production of audio files ensuring appropriate sound quality for distribution on digital platforms.
- Gather more audio military interviews from as broad a cross-section of A.A. members in active military duty as possible, including members of the Canadian Armed Forces and native Spanish- and French-speaking members.
- Develop a questionnaire to be used for future audio military interviews that include topics such as Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), injuries, and barriers that sober alcoholics on active military duty face in getting sober.
- Seek the help of the Fellowship in reaching out to possible candidates for the audio military interviews.
- Utilize higher quality equipment professional services to record and oversee the production of the audio military interviews to improve sound and visual design quality.
- Utilize graphics such as the “Blue People” banner, alternate backgrounds and soundtracks to enhance the audio and visual design of the audio files presentations.

From the August 1, 2021, trustees’ C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The chair appointed a subcommittee, Tom H. chair, Molly A., and Cindy F. on creating audio interviews of A.A. members who are in the Armed Forces. The committee agreed to the following scope for the subcommittee:

- Identify a consultant to serve on the committee with a target date.
- Develop a questionnaire for audio-military interviews.
- Request to a broad cross-section of A.A. members.

In order to support this effort, the committee agreed to identify consultants from Canada and the U.S. with relevant military experience, who can continue the work on the project. The committee consulted with the chair of Nominating Committee,

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regarding procedure (#13 Procedures for selecting consultants for General Service Board Committees) to be done prior meetings in September 2021.

From the October 31, 2021, trustees' C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee met in executive session to review an update on the consultant search to support efforts related to audio interviews with military professionals.

From the December 8, 2021, trustees' C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee discussed the candidates that were interviewed for the consultant position. The interview team selected two consultants, one from Canada and one from U.S. The selections were submitted to the Nominating committee for their review and will be forward to General Service Board for their approval at their December 16, 2021, meeting.

From the January 30, 2022, trustees' C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee affirmed that the two consultants Tom P. (U.S. consultant) and Gerry C. (Canada consultant) brought on to participate in the Military audio interviews project are members of the CPC-Treatment/Accessibilities committee with a voice and no vote. The committee also noted that the consultants' term is for one year from January 2022-January 2023 with the option to renew for one additional year. The subcommittee chair, Tom H. welcomed and acknowledged Tom P. and Gerry C. Both consultants and the subcommittee chair shared about their plans for the project:

- Standard roadmap between U.S. and Canada having a unified plan.
- Not only seeking interviews but, also seeking contacts from various military branches
- The subcommittee chair is developing a project plan that will include reporting to the entire committee.

The committee discussed the three audio interviews currently on A.A.org. In two of the audio clips, the interviewees identified their service rank. A request has been made by the third interviewees to add their rank to the audio clip. Publishing provided an estimated cost of \$600 to edit the clip. The staff secretary will work with the committee chair to facilitate this request. The committee looks forward to a progress report at the July 2022 meeting.

Staff secretary note:

On February 9, 2022, the trustee chair noted that during the January 2022 committee meeting, the committee stated that its consultants would be developing the framework and game plan on future activities in concert with subcommittee efforts. The committee agreed that a verbal progress report on any developments might be

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shared with the Conference Committee on Treatment-Accessibilities under discussion of the trustee committee report during the joint meeting at Conference.

From the 2022 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities Committee Consideration:

The committee reviewed and accepted a progress report on military audio interviews and suggested that the trustees' Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

- Reach out to military senior leadership.
- Seek interviews from members in various military/armed forces branches.
- Consider broader distribution channels, through diverse communication methods such as AA Grapevine, La Viña, WhatsApp, and LIM.
- Distribute a questionnaire to interviewees for the audio-military project.
- The military consultants on the trustees' Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee develop a project plan that will include reporting to the entire trustee committee.

From the July 31, 2022, trustees' C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee reviewed the progress report on military audio interviews provided by its two appointed consultants. A sample Scratch Track was presented for the committee's review to evaluate the sound and quality. The committee found the audio quality and dual interview style to be effective; however, the committee agreed that the content could be more focused on the goal of the project, and that utilizing the suggestions provided by the 2022 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities and the questionnaire provided by the Consultants may serve to provide the focus needed. The committee requested that these suggestions be considered in the development of any future audio content.

The chair appointed a Military Audio Interview Subcommittee to include Kerry M. (chair), Gerry C., Tom P. and Brenda B., staff secretary. The scope is to obtain interviews from members in various branches of the armed services. The subcommittee requested that the consultants conduct calls for interviewees through broader distribution channels with diverse communication methods including AA Grapevine, La Viña, WhatsApp and *Loners-Internationalists Meeting (LIM)*. The committee looks forward to a progress report at the October 2022 meeting.

From the October 30, 2022, trustees' C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee reviewed the progress report on military audio interviews project. The consultants shared two hundred emails received with interest in participating in interviews. Seventy-five percent were veterans and twenty-five percent were active duty. The focus of the project is on active-duty members. There was a total of fifty members, forty from U.S. and ten from Canada, representing a diverse cross-section

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of those who serve in different branches of the military, have different ranks, and genders.

For the audio project to be useful in carrying the message to people in Canada, it must include at least one interview conducted in French. There was separate conversation regarding whether the Conference would require the final product to be accessible in Spanish language which could include adding closed captions.

The committee reviewed one sample audio recording and gave the consultants and staff positive feedback that they were quite powerful and a great example of how to move forward with the remaining interviews.

There was a discussion of length of audio files to post online and an ideal format. The committee shared that the production team should maintain editorial license for each recording. Final interview recordings are planned to be completed by December 31, 2022. The committee agreed to renew the term of the consultants' work for another year, starting in January 2023.

From the January 29, 2023, trustees' C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee reviewed the progress report from the Working Group on Military Audio Interviews.

There was a thoughtful discussion focused on the need to develop a distribution plan for how the military audio recordings will be used to reach alcoholics effectively.

The committee **agreed to forward** to the 2023 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities the "Military audio interview" report.

Background:

1. Progress report on the Military Audio Interview project from Trustees' CPC TA
2. Audio file sample, "N██████" (*for committees' listening only*)
3. Audio file sample, "Alex" (*for committees' listening only*)
4. Transcript of sample, "N██████"
5. Transcript of sample, "Alex"

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**2023 Trustees' Treatment and Accessibilities Committee
Subcommittee on Military Audio Interview project
Progress Report: January 29, 2023**

Subcommittee: Kerry M., chair, Tom P., ACM, Gerry C., ACM, Misha Q., secretary

Background and History: In January 2022, Trustees' Nominating Committee approved the recommendation made by Trustees' CPC/TA, which had followed the Procedure 14 process to select Gerry C. of Peachland, British Columbia and Tom P. of Cedar Point, North Carolina to serve as consultants for the Military Audio project.

The two consultants, along with Trustee Tom H., formed a subcommittee which reported to Trustees' CPC/TA. They were tasked with the following:

- Develop a questionnaire to be used for future audio military interviews that include topics such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), injuries, and barriers that sober alcoholics on active military duty face in getting sober
- Seek the help of the Fellowship in reaching out to possible candidates for the audio military interviews
- Utilize higher quality equipment professional services to record and oversee the production of the audio military interviews to improve sound and visual design quality
- Utilize graphics such as the "Blue People" banner, alternate backgrounds, and soundtracks to enhance the audio and visual design of the audio files presentations.

At the April 2022 meeting of the General Service Conference, the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities reviewed and accepted a progress report on military audio interviews. The committee made the following additional suggestions for the subcommittee:

- Reach out to military senior leadership.
- Seek interviews from members in various military/armed forces branches.
- Consider broader distribution channels, through diverse communication methods such as AA Grapevine, La Viña, WhatsApp, and *LIM*.
- Distribute a questionnaire to interviewees for the audio-military project.

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- The military consultants on the trustees' Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee develop a project plan that will include reporting to the entire trustee committee.

Work Completed to Date: Following their appointment, the consultants, began working with GSO staff to outline a process for reaching out to A.A. members who are actively serving military members. In July 2022, Trustee Tom H. rotated off the committee and Trustee Kerry M. rotated on.

With the help of GSO staff, requests for participation were shared with the fellowship via the AA.org web site, the AA Grapevine, and the Meeting Guide App. Emailed communication was also sent to Delegates, Trustees and Directors of AAWS and AA Grapevine, asking that a request for volunteers be shared as widely as possible with members of the fellowship.

More than 200 sober members of Alcoholics Anonymous responded to the calls. Of these, approximately 150 were veterans, and thus, were not included in the project because the Conference Committee had requested interviews from active duty service people.

The consultants also developed a series of questions to ask each participant. Their questions specifically focused on the areas specified by the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), injuries, and barriers that sober alcoholics on active military duty face in getting sober.

The consultants, with administrative and technical help from GSO staff, interviewed twenty-three active-duty service members. With the assistance of GSO digital production staff, high-quality audio interviews were recorded using Zoom technology.

GSO staff also worked with the consultants to edit two of the completed audio interviews. The editing process focused on removing extraneous conversation, outside noise, digressions and the occasional "um" or "uh."

The stories that were recorded included wonderful shares, messages with both depth and weight. We are deeply grateful for the military service members who took the time to share their experience, strength, and hope so that others, service members, veterans and civilians alike might hear a message of hope.

At the October 2022 meeting of trustees CPC/TA Committee, one sample audio recording was presented, and the committee members gave the consultants and staff positive feedback that they were quite powerful and a great example of how to move forward with the remaining interviews.

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There was a discussion of length of audio files to post online and an ideal format. The committee shared that the production team should maintain editorial license for each recording. All of the interview recordings were completed by December 2022. The committee agreed to renew the term of the consultants work for another year, starting in January 2023.

Following the October Trustee's CPC/TA meeting, three additional interviews were completed. Of note, in the last quarter of 2022, an extensive additional effort was made to find a Francophone A.A. member who could be interviewed for the project. When this effort seemed to be unsuccessful, a decision was made to have an English language interview translated into French and voiced by a native French speaker.

This is essential because the subcommittee was charged with reaching out to military leadership in the U.S. and Canada. Since Canada is officially bilingual, any outreach we do would need to be made available for both English and French speakers.

GSO Staff note: a question was raised in the October 2022 Trustees' CPC/TA meeting about whether interviews in Spanish should be sought, given that the subcommittee was working on securing French language interviews. Consultant Tom P. explained that because the official language of the U.S. Armed Forces is English, communication with U.S. Service members would logically take place in English.

In November 2022, Trustees' CPC/TA forwarded a request to Trustees' Nominating Committee to approve a one-year extension of the period of service for consultants Gerry C. and Tom P. That request will be considered in January 2023.

Future Work of the Military Audio Interview Project: During the 2023 year, the subcommittee members will be developing a detailed plan for approaching senior military to offer the audio interviews as a resource for military service members.

Consider moving in the following direction to finalize the interviews and post in our communication channels. This will allow us to use this new content created during the GSO Military Audio Interview Project.

The Action Plan that we want to gain agreement on is as follows:

Like recent projects such as the GSO Podcast and Google Ads, this project is now at the stage for the GSO staff to take on the role of responsibility to manage the completion on the production for all remaining audio interviews that are recorded. Full reporting of progress is a major part of this action plan.

- GSO staff is providing two samples of edited audio interviews for the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities to listen to as the samples of how all

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the remaining interview audio files will be produced to complete the project.

- GSO staff will continue to obtain oversight from the trustees' CPC/TA Committee working closely with the Military Audio Project consultants to finalize this project and produce quality audio files.
- GSO staff will transcribe, edit, translate, finalize, and post audio to the AA.org web site and other effective approved communication channels.
- GSO staff will continue to review all suggestions from the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities to "Utilize graphics such as the "Blue People" banner, alternate backgrounds, and soundtracks to enhance the audio and visual design of the audio files presentations" GSO staff will create an engaging set of resources that will carry the message to military personnel as well as others in need.
- GSO staff will continue to review all suggestions made by trustees' CPC/T-A Committee, investigating ways to post audio in a variety of channels. For example, short clips on particular topics like PTSD or being sober on deployment might work alongside of longer audio in which listeners might get a fuller picture of a sober member's journey.
- Edited audio files, once posted to the AA.org site will also be shared more widely with others at AAWS and AA Grapevine departments with the intention of making them available for other work of carrying the message. For instance, we could imagine the materials created for outreach to military leadership could be useful for other CPC endeavors, while audio files posted to the web could also be used as an Accessibility resource for those who can't read or the vision impaired.
- Ongoing progress reporting and analytics on the project goals will be made to the trustees' CPC/T-A Committee and the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

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Transcript of Audio Interview with Nicquie

MUSIC INTRO:

Tom:

hi, my name is Tom and I'm an alcoholic. In an effort to improve outreach to members in the armed services who may be suffering with an alcohol problem, we're collecting interviews from current AA members serving in the US and Canadian Armed Forces to share the experience and strength and hope they have found in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Today we'll be talking with Nicquie. Nicquie, please tell us a little bit about your military background and A- AA experience.

Nicquie:

Thank you, Tom. My name is Nicquie, I am a Sergeant First Class in the Minnesota Army National Guard, and I have been in for just a little over 18 years now. I am a recovering alcoholic and a proud member of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have not had a drink of alcohol or used any illicit substances since December 8th, 2017.

Uh, my hope in sharing my... parts of my story today is to help someone who can relate to what I've been through, um, try and find the help that they need, and become happy, joyous and free like those of us who are members of this program.

Um, I started drinking in my early 20s. I joined the military in 2004, between my junior and senior years of high school. I've deployed twice: once to Iraq in 2007-2008 as a 42 Alpha, and once to Kuwait in 2021 to 2022 as a medic. I've also been full-time in the military as an AGR soldier in the Minnesota Guard since 2008. Um, if I hadn't gotten sober through AA, I would not be in the current rank or position I hold today as a battalion S1 NCOIC in an aviation support battalion.

I'm really excited for this opportunity to share a little bit about my experience here and hopefully help a few service members find a solution to their alcohol problem.

Tom:

Thank you. Uh, Nicquie, can you tell us when did you start drinking, and how did drinking become a part of your life once you started drinking? And, uh, why don't we start with that?

Nicquie:

Yeah. I... I had tried alcohol and had gotten drunk on, you know, several occasions before I turned 21. Um, it wasn't a huge part of life actually until after I got back from my first deployment. Um, I wasn't drinking in high school when I decided to join, but when I had got home from my deployment to Iraq, I was in a state of, like, hurt and confusion. So I had, you know, no idea what my future was going to like. Um, and I was in a relationship when I was deployed; I was engaged to another service member that was on the deployment with me, and he broke off the engagement about a month before we came home. So my future was very unknown, and the breakup brought up a lot of insecurities in my life.

And on that deployment to Iraq, I'd turned 21. So when I got home from deployment, I had this realization, like, oh, I'm 21, I can drink in bars! And that's essentially what I did for the next 10 years (laughs), because, uh, you know, I had the access at that point. And, uh, yeah, it took a while for, for it to really become a problem and then for me to realize that it was a problem. But, um, for me, uh, you know, it wasn't I took my first drink and I just knew that this is, you know, something that was going to be super important to me. It didn't... It didn't play a major role in my life until my 20s.

Tom:

So did you fear about hurting your career, for example losing your security clearance or, you know, job impact, uh, when you realized you needed help and you came into AA?

Nicquie:

Absolutely. Um, I took the anonymity of AA very seriously when I first got in, um, because I, I, I didn't know anything about it, right? I thought I had to be anonymous and I couldn't let people know that I was in AA. And I thought, well, how did people ever find out about AA before the internet, you know, before they could log on and find a meeting in 30 minutes down the road, you know? But, um, I did not share my sobriety with anyone at work initially, uh, because I was afraid of the repercussions, you know? I... I am a s- I am a security clearance manager in the military, and so I know what kinds of things happen, um, for people to get their clearance taken away. And, uh, that's my... it's my livelihood, it's, you know, my job. Monday through Friday, I... this is what I do. So I was very afraid to talk to anyone about it.

And then, you know... It's funny, um, there's a confirmation bias that exists, you know? There's this idea that when you decide that you're going to buy a certain type of car, you start seeing that car everywhere now, because now you're thinking about buying it. The same thing happened with me and sobriety. As soon as I got sober, I became more aware of those around me who were also sober, and those who were in the military who were also sober. And, you know, when you go to a military function, um, uh, i-in the... in the first couple weeks of my getting sober, we, we had a military ball, and there's a grog in the middle of the room that everybody dumps different types of liquor in, and everybody

has to try it. And, uh, you know, as a female in the military, when you're not drinking, everybody automatically assumes that you're pregnant, and that's the only conceivable reason why you wouldn't be drinking-

Nicquie:

This is what I would tell someone. As far as your career goes, it's not getting into AA or going to treatment or getting sober that's going to hurt you, it's the continued use, the continued drinking or use of illicit substances; that's what's going to hurt you in the long run. Most leadership... In my experience, most leadership are extremely understanding of soldiers who want to get help for themselves. If they're not supportive, that's why there exists the chain of command.

When you... When one door closes, that other, you know... every commander has a open-door policy. It's in the regulation; they have to have it. So if you're getting the door slammed in your face or being told you're going to be punished or, you know, not promoted or not get this PCS move that you want or something because of a disease that you have, you have grounds to fight that. And like I said, in my experience, most commanders and first sergeants and leaders are extremely compassionate for soldiers who are looking to help themselves.

And the wonderful thing about AA is that it's anonymous. Nobody is going to find out unless you tell them or unless you see someone else that you know in the program, which, oh by the way, they have to follow the anonymity as well... So that was one of my biggest fears coming in; I thought, oh my gosh, what if I know a bunch of people in there? Well, if I knew them, they... that means they're also alcoholics, and they are my people, and that's okay. Now I, I hope to see people that I know (laughs) in AA. It's... It just brings out a whole nother type of connection that I have only compared to military connection with other people. You know, you go through all this crap together in the military, and end up coming out of it, you know, on the other side; that's exactly what AA is like. We all share this common disease that is basically trying to kill us, and we've been able to find a lot of... a lot of joy and happiness and serenity in life now because we don't drink anymore.

So don't let your fear of negative consequences on your career stop you from getting sober, because it is worth it. It's the drinking that will kill you, not getting sober.

Tom:

Cool. All right. So is there anything else that you would like to share or to say to a service member who's struggling now and listening to this and has an alcohol problem?

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Nicquie:

What I would want to say to anyone listening to this is, if you're listening to this, you're probably an alcoholic, and there is a solution to your problem. If you don't find it in AA, please just go look someplace else.

So if you're just curious about it, you know, find an open meeting on AA... on any AA website in your area, go to an open meeting, find somebody, start talking to them, start asking questions, get curious and, you know, just give it a try. Just see what happens. That's what I would say.

MUSIC OUTRO:

Tom:

Thank you very much, Nicquie, for sharing your experience, strength and hope with us today.

Nicquie:

Thank you, Tom.

Transcript of Audio Interview with Alex

MUSIC INTRO:

Gerry:

Hello and thank you for taking the time to listen to this Military audio interview. Uh, I'm an alcoholic, my name is Gerry, I'm a retired member of the Royal Canadian Air Force. I was a helicopter pilot for 35 plus years, and I'm acting today as one of the volunteers doing this interview project, I'll be doing the interview posing some questions and talking back-and-forth with one of our members.

Today it's my pleasure to welcome Alex V. Alex is a member of the Canadian Military, I'll let him take a moment to introduce himself, give you his background and more details as to, when he joined and when he became a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, after he's finished with a brief self-introduction, we'll go into a series of questions, which hopefully will bring out some interesting information for someone listening. So, with no further a due, Alex, welcome thank you very much for being here with us today, and as I just mentioned over to you for a moment or two, to introduce yourself?

Alex:

Thanks Gerry, my name is Alex, I'm an alcoholic. I'm, a Lieutenant Navy in the Royal Canadian Navy, I've been in for 10-years now. Um, I'm a recovering alcoholic, a member of, uh, AA, I haven't had a drink of alcohol since February 20th, 2018. I hope that by sharing a bit of my story in this audio, I might help someone just like I was back then, who knows there's a problem, and is trying to figure out what to about it next.

I started drinking at 15-years old, joined the Military in 2012, uh, as a DEO, a year after finishing university and, uh, I've served on most of, uh, Her Majesty's Canadian Ships on the West Coast, as well as a bit of time here in Ottawa. Uh, getting and sober, getting and staying sober in AA, definitely hasn't hurt, uh, it's brought about positive changes in my Military career and in my life, uh, in general, and I'm happy to share a bit of both out here.

Gerry:

Thank you Alex, So, what was your early experience with alcohol like-

Alex:

Um, I remember countless times where I'd be crying drunk, uh, or sober for that matter, saying that, "I- I need help, and I couldn't stop, uh, and I didn't know why." And I think

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while I was definitely genuine in those moments at first, they quickly turn into, you know, an episode directed by my alcoholism that, uh, trying to get some sympathy or- or figure out a way to- to secure my next drink.

Gerry:

Yeah, I hear you. Um, when you made the decision to join the Military, ~~uh, did-~~ did the way you were drinking, or did your drinking play any part in that, were you concerned, "That you drank too much, and they might not, uh, care for that," or did you think that, uh, "Hey, the Navy that's a great place to go to drink all the time?" What kind of an attitude did you have if at all that it- it was associated with your drinking, uh, pattern, when it came to joining the Military?

Alex:

Alcohol and- and getting my next drink, uh, the planning, it was part of my everyday life. Uh, one way to describe it is like, you know, my wife were a mistress, ~~uh,~~ because it totally consumed all my decision. Uh, that's an interesting question, you know, looking back if anything, um, maybe- maybe I did a quick risk assessment and said, "No, no, this is not gonna interfere with my drinking.

But besides that, I know, I know how to, a ton of fun at, uh, basic training, um, not sure if that was supposed to be fun or not, but it, not- not the standing out in the field parts, but the, ~~uh,~~ the drinking is what makes me say that. ~~Um,~~ but I also when I had, there- there was never any pressure to- to drink though, ~~um,~~ if that's, if that's what you're getting at, like looking back it was all pressure that I put on myself, ~~um,~~ and bottom-line, you know, I wanted that pressure, like maybe there was no pres- I- I created the pressure for myself, anything to justify my drinking

Gerry:

So, you mentioned before that you joined as a DEO or a Direct Entry Officer, so you completed university then if I still remember how all those programs worked. So, you'd be in your early 20s when you joined, went through basic training, you mentioned and, (laughs), my memories too, you know, we remember the good stuff with wonderful and selective memory. Um, and off to the Navy you- you go, and I know I believe that you originally were, what was used to be called a MARS Officer back in the day, and now is, uh, Naval Warfare Officer.

Alex:

Drinking did play a part in the troubles that I had, um, day-to-day, in fact it was one of the main reasons I would say, that I had difficulties. ~~Uh,~~ but it wasn't for me it wasn't, ~~uh,~~

often at work. Um, I had a lot of close calls, where superiors, uh, made comments, or had suspicions. Um, but I was never counseled formally and, um, yeah, just like, I mean, people had- have covered for me in the Military, but they've also covered for me in- in civilian life as well, you know, I as an alcoholic, I surrounded myself with enablers, um, and I picked and choose.

So, yeah, I wouldn't say there's a big difference between the two there.

Gerry:

That's excellent, thank Alex, "How did you know then that you needed help," what- uh, what brought you to the moment of saying, "I- I- I have to do something about this?" Apart from as we already discussed those moments where you said, "You couldn't stop and you needed help," but when it became concrete, when it became something you were actually did, what did that look like?

Alex:

Yeah. So, I mean, from an, from an early- early in my drinking, I- I knew, I think deep down that I needed help, but for... so as obviously the Military has an, um, a special astricts beside the job, you know, uh, I'm a Canadian, I'm an officer in the forces, but I'm also, you know, a father, a husband, son, brother, and not only did my life as an officer in the Military take a hit, but my life as a father, and brother, and son, uh, did as well.

I was exhausted, um, all the lies that I would tell, the constant scheming, it got, it got really tiring. Um, I was on the West Coast at Christmas, I got leave to come back East for the holidays, like I did, uh, every morning, the day of our flight, I woke up early and started drinking before everyone got up, and I tried to consume just enough to- to get me through, a- a nice buzz to get me through, um, the- the day of traveling.

And, uh, a friend of my wife's took us to the airport, my- myself, my wife, and my daughter, and, um, getting to the airport I- I- I mean, the next thing I know I was waking up in our, in our bed back home and I, apparently I passed out, and was sat in one of the chairs off to the side of the airport, and they wouldn't let us on the flight and they had rebooked it for- for later in the, in- in the day.

Um, and then in the New Year, um, the same thing go, leaving Vancouver Island to go to the mainland, same kind of episode with the- the fairy. Um, so yeah, I- I think, I would say "If- if you think you need help, you probably need help." I, like taking a drink, uh, and driving for example, I've co- I've come to see that a, I, for a nonalcoholic in view eye, "They don't get another one." They say to themselves, "You know, I- I messed up here that was a bad decision, uh, that could've cost my life, somebody else's life, I'm not

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gonna do that again," or- or passing out for an important meeting, "You know I, if I, if I drink too much and miss a meeting, or miss an important, um, gathering, you know, okay, I'm not gonna do that again."

Gerry:

Uh, Alex, this has been great, I- I think we've covered the whole waterfront, pardon the awful pun for two Navy guys. Um, but before I finish, I wanted to just give you that open ended question, is there anything else you'd like to share, any areas we haven't delved into that you think will be worth mentioning or discussing for somebody like we were back in the day, listening to, um, from your own life experience as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous and a member of the or Canadian Military?

Alex:

Yeah. Uh, I'll- I'll, uh, I just quickly wanted to tell, um, uh, a story, it sums it up for me beautifully. Um, so one day after work, I'm walking through the park with some of my coworkers, and family, and I'm drunk, and it's a beautiful day, and, uh, but I- I'm drunk, and I ended up stepping in a, in a deep hole and I can't get out, and my wife she tells the group, uh, you know, "I know what to do, I'll be right back."

So, she leaves, she comes back with the psychiatrist, and we talk for a bit, and a 110 dollar bill later and I'm still stuck in the hole, um, so my buddy, one of my coworkers, he says, you know, "I'll be right back." So, he goes to the MIR, brings the doc to the park in this hole and- and the doc just confess well, I'm in the hole and she's asking some questions but, she can only do so much with me being down this hole. Uh, and 25- minutes later I'm still in the hole, uh, and- and so my parent say, "Okay, I got it." And the doc leaves with my parents and they bring back a priest, and now I'm talking to this priest, and, uh, he's going on about life, and having a good conversation but it's getting dark and so the priest say, you know, "I'll be back tomorrow."

And I, s- the whole group leaves and- and just as they're out of sight, leaving the park, there's an alcoholic walking by and he sees me in the hole and he jumps in, and I start panicking, you know, "What are you, what are you doing, now we're- we're both stuck down here?" And he says, you know, "Don't worry, I've been here before, I know the way out," and, uh, that's what AA has done for me, uh, plain and simple, like it's- it saved my life, um, I'd also like to say, uh, just go easy on yourself to anybody who's listening to this, but, uh, yeah, um.

Gerry:

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That's great Alex, that's perfect. Thank you very much. I'd like to thank Alex for taking the time to be with us today, and I'd like to finish the interview by saying sort of what we said at the beginning, we really hope that what we've offered to you today, might be helpful to you, if you're in the situation that we were in, and you know you've got some sort of a problem and you're not sure exactly what you can do about it, you may well be like one of us, and if you are, we sure hope you come and try Alcoholics Anonymous, try a few meetings, talk to some members, it very likely, very possibly could save your life, and if it isn't the thing for you, if alcoholism isn't what's actually in your life or what your problem is, uh, we would reassure you that although alcoholism has been recognized as a disease an illness by medical societies, it- it isn't contagious.

So, if you come to AA meetings, you can't catch it from us. So, we hope you've enjoyed listening to this, we hope it's been of some help, and we thank you for your time. Thank you, like I said, [inaudible 00:38:17]-

ITEM C: Review contents and format of Treatment Kit and Workbook

Background notes:

Kits and Workbooks for C.P.C., Corrections, Public Information, Treatment and Accessibilities are reviewed by the appropriate Conference Committees during each General Service Conference.

Workbooks and Kits are service pieces. Any suggested changes to their content from the Conference committee are put forth as Committee Considerations rather than recommendations.

Between Conferences, ideas for changes to a Workbook or to the contents of a Kit may be received. These may be reviewed by the appropriate trustees' Committee and implemented, or the trustees' committee may choose to forward an idea to the Conference Committee for review.

Typically, service kits are updated annually each fall. Due to pandemic-induced supply chain and paper shortage challenges, implementation of the updates has been delayed.

From the October 2022 trustees' CPC/Treatment/Accessibilities-Remote Communities meeting:

The staff secretary provided an update that the annual kit contents update is underway to capture all suggested changes from 2021 and 2022. The committee looks forward to a final update at the January 2023 meeting.

Background:

1. Treatment Committee Workbook is available to view on:

https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/m-40i_TFWorkbook.pdf

- ENG - https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/f-167w_TF_Kit.pdf
- FR - https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/ff-167w_TF_Kit.pdf
- SP - https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/sf-167w_TF_Kit.pdf

ITEM D: Review contents and format of Accessibilities Kit and Workbook

Background notes:

Kits and Workbooks for C.P.C., Corrections, Public Information, Treatment and Accessibilities are reviewed by the appropriate Conference Committees during each General Service Conference.

Workbooks and Kits are service pieces. Any suggested changes to their content from the Conference committee are put forth as Committee Considerations rather than recommendations.

Between Conferences, ideas for changes to a Workbook or to the contents of a Kit may be received. These may be reviewed by the appropriate trustees' Committee and implemented, or the trustees' committee may choose to forward an idea to the Conference Committee for review.

Typically, service kits are updated annually each fall. Due to pandemic-induced supply chain and paper shortage challenges, implementation of the updates has been delayed.

From the October 2022 trustees' CPC/Treatment/Accessibilities meeting:

Accessibilities Kit and Workbook: The staff secretary provided an update that the annual kit contents update is underway to capture all suggested changes from 2021 and 2022. The committee looks forward to a final update at the January 2023 meeting.

Background: On the website

1. Accessibilities Committee Kit available to view on
https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/m-48i_SNWorkbook.pdf
 - EN - https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/f-182w_SN_Kit.pdf
 - FR - https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/ff-182w_SN_Kit.pdf
 - SP https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/sf-182w_SN_Kit.pdf

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ITEM E: Consider request to do an Accessibilities Inventory of Alcoholics Anonymous throughout its services and structure.

Background notes:

From the October 30, 2022 Trustees' C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

PAI #29: The committee **agreed to forward** to the 2023 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities the proposed agenda item to “Consider request to do an organization-wide ‘Accessibilities Inventory’ of Alcoholics Anonymous throughout its services and structure evaluate what is found to communicate and improve how we function. Also, that an action plan for improvement to be made from the information gathered.

Background attachments:

1. PAI #29 Proposed Agenda Item to conduct an organization-wide “accessibilities inventory”
2. Samples of Service Structure Services and Activities

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<p>(1) Submit a clear and concisely worded motion.</p>
<p>We move to do an organization wide “Accessibilities Inventory” of Alcoholics Anonymous throughout its services and structure and evaluate what is found in an effort to communicate and improve how we function. Also, that an action plan for improvement to be made from the information gathered.</p>
<p>(2) What problem does this proposed item address?</p>
<p>Many items and services such as large print literature, audio format literature and accessibility committees and accessibility guidelines exist. Much more be can done such as additional literature in audio and ASL/visual format and better collaboration with the Hispanic and other foreign language AA communities. In addition the services and options we have available could be more optimally communicated and made visible to those in need and the people assisting them. Many lack awareness of the accessibilities checklist or what to do if someone with a barrier reaches out for help or comes to a meeting. Some, such as the elderly or homebound, loners or those with language barriers are never reached or find too many obstacles to stay. Some key steps, even easy ones such as a tab or page on accessibilities on the GSO website highlighting our available resources including accessibilities committees and what they are, and putting the accessibilities checklist / its explanation on the new group form can make a difference. An inventory would also obtain the voice of the voice of the very members who have and live with these needs. They know best what the barriers are.</p>
<p>(3) What level of group conscience, if any, discussed the proposed agenda item? Make it clear who is submitting the item (an individual, group, district, area, etc.).</p>
<p><i>Note: While all items are received equally, experience has shown that ideas greatly benefit from the value of a broader group conscience. Consider if and with whom you would like to have a group conscience discussion on the proposed agenda item prior to submitting.</i></p>
<p>This idea has been spoken of at the monthly All Access accessibility meeting as well as the Area 29 Accessibility Committee and received positive feedback. It was brought to the Area 29 Assembly on August 13, 2022 and approved unanimously.</p>
<p>(4) Provide background information that describes and supports the reasoning for the proposal. List background material(s) included with the proposal:</p>
<p>There are still numerous obstacles within our fellowship and its services for members and prospective members in carrying and receiving the message of recovery for persons with a disability. There are also barriers in language differences and reaching remote communities. Looking at and inventorying how we are doing in meeting these needs is the first step in improving providing services and access to the message of recovery.</p> <p>See Attachment for additional background</p>

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(5) What are the intended/expected outcomes if this proposed item is approved?

If this agenda item is approved an “accessibilities inventory” of Alcoholics Anonymous, its service structure, resources (such as GSO and its website, literature, and communications) by the organization itself or by an outside resource would be done. This process would ideally include members with a disability or accommodation need and also professional’s familiar with how to optimize and organize these services. Information obtained and suggestions for change would be shared with the fellowship. Of note, the first plain language Big Book is being developed and this project could provide valuable information for this.

The potential impact is large. This is about how easy it is or isn’t throughout our organization to find and use accessibility information and how we are communicating about it, optimizing awareness, improving communication and how we meet the needs found and anticipated. Think of the changes made to our service manual and the difference that has made. Information is much clearer.

(6) Provide a primary contact for the submission.

Kurt W., Delegate, Area 29

(7) Final comments:

There are still numerous obstacles within our fellowship and its services for members and prospective members in carrying and receiving the message of recovery for persons with a disability. There are also barriers in language differences and reaching remote communities. Looking at and inventorying how we are doing in meeting these needs is the first step in improving providing services and access to the message of recovery.

Submit completed forms to the GSO Staff Member on the Conference Desk:

EMAIL: Conference@aa.org

POSTAL MAIL: Attn: Conference Desk
 General Service Office
 P.O. Box 459
 Grand Central Station New
 York, NY 10163

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Updated 7/22

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Alcoholics Anonymous Area 29 Maryland General Service, Inc.

Maryland General Service, Inc.
P.O. Box 207
Benson, MD 21018

August 17, 2022

Conference Coordinator
General Service Office
P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

Dear Conference Coordinator,

Attached are documents that provide information for a proposed Conference Agenda item from Area 29 for the 73rd General Service Conference.

The Motion reads:

We move to do an organization wide “Accessibilities Inventory” of Alcoholics Anonymous throughout its services and structure and evaluate what is found in an effort to communicate and improve how we function. Also, that an action plan for improvement to be made from the information gathered.

This Motion was brought to the Area 29 Assembly held on August 13, 2022. It passed unanimously in favor of forwarding it to the Conference Coordinator with additional background information. The Motion originated with our Accessibility Committee and was brought directly to our Area Assembly due to the compressed time schedule resulting from the EDW 3-year trial.

Thank you for all that you do for the GSO and our Fellowship. Please contact me with any questions that you may have regarding this potential Agenda item.

Kurt W.
Delegate
Area 29, Panel 72
Corrections Conference Committee



“To be vital, faith must be accompanied by self-sacrifice and unselfish, constructive action.”
– *Alcoholics Anonymous*, pg. 93

Attachments:

- I. PAI Form – Accessibilities Inventory
- II. Additional Background Accessibilities Inventory

Additional Background – Accessibilities Inventory PAI

“The 43 million Americans with disabilities comprise the largest minority group in the United States. While their special abilities may vary considerably, these Americans share an increased risk for alcohol and other drug abuse.”-Debra Guthman, a specialist in working with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in recovery. “An analysis of variables that impact treatment outcomes of chemically dependent Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.”

In addition, our elder population continues to grow and need assistance and services and our senior alcoholics are an underserved population in AA. One member likes to say “You may not have a disability now, but odds are you will one day.”

What we have found working on an Accessibilities committee is that we do not have concise, clear, easy to find resources beyond the basics. Simple things to know such as the Deaf use ASL which has a different format than written or spoken English, the visually impaired use large print, screen readers and audio, the hard of hearing use closed captioning, hearing aids, sound amplifiers and loops. There is a lack of awareness/overall view to accessibilities and communication can be improved. Large organizations such as college campuses have had to look at accessibility closely and communicate and implement change. Accessibility consultants exist. There are ways to look and improve what we are doing and I think that if we inventory we will find a need. Let’s see where we are at, what we need and what we can do.

Please note-Debra G.T., Ed.D whose article is referenced above is an excellent resource for anything with Deaf/Hard of Hearing and addictions, including literature. She would be an excellent resource and is currently working with Area 29 Accessibilities. See Linked in.

Samples of Service Structure Services and activities

Secretary's Note: *This summary is intended to facilitate the discussion of the proposed agenda item (PAI-29), "Consider request to do an organization-wide 'Accessibilities Inventory' of Alcoholics Anonymous throughout its services and structure evaluate what is found to communicate and improve how we function. The samples include some activities where accessibilities have been considered, and other activities where considering accessibilities could be useful.*

Samples: Fellowship-wide or within the A.A. Service Structure

- A.A. Membership survey – see 2023 Conference Committee on Public Information, agenda item O.
- General Service Conference Inventory Report – available on the Dashboard >Communication and References > GSC Inventory Report
- 2020-21 Progress report Trustees' Literature Subcommittee on RIPTAB (Researching Issues, Possible Tools and Access to the Book, Alcoholics Anonymous) - Revealed that there was a need across the Fellowship for what is being called a "plain language Big Book." In the report, some difficulty accessing the A.A. message was because people had difficulty accessing or understanding our literature.
- Grapevine and La Viña Magazines:
 - August 2022: [Story, "We Can Do This"](#)
 - May 2022: [Story, "On the Go"](#)
 - October 2019: [Issue, "Is AA Accessible to All Who Need it?"](#)
 - September 2010: [Special Issue on Accessibility](#)
 - Nov/Dic 2020: [El despacho de Accesibilidades y Comunidades Remotas](#)
- Area and District and Group Inventories
- Checklist - [SMF-208 Accessibilities Checklist for Meetings and Groups](#)
- Guidelines - [MG-16 A.A. Guidelines on Accessibility for All Alcoholics](#)

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ITEM F: Discuss carrying the message to alcoholics with intellectual or information processing challenges, communication challenges and diverse neurological abilities.

Background notes:

From the October 30, 2022 Trustees' C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee discussed the proposed agenda item (PAI #130) "Consider the development of pamphlet directed to the alcoholic with learning disabilities, social disorders, developmental disabilities, and cognitive disorders and took no action.

The committee instead **agreed to forward** a discussion topic to the 2023 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities to discuss the best methods for the Fellowship to reach the alcoholic with learning disabilities, social disorders, developmental disabilities, and cognitive disorders.

Background:

1. History and activities related to carrying the A.A. message to alcoholics with learning disabilities, social disorders, developmental disabilities, intellectual or information processing challenges, communication challenges and diverse neurological abilities.

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**The History of Activities Related to Carrying the Message to Alcoholics with
Intellectual or Information Processing Challenges Communication Challenges
and Diverse Neurological Abilities
February 6, 2023**

Over many years, questions and concerns related to carrying the message to alcoholics who experience challenges with intellectual or information processing, communication, or diverse neurological abilities, have been considered by individual members, trustees' committees, and Conference committees.

The following history includes activities from the trustees' CPC/Treatment-Accessibilities committee (CPC-TA), the Conference Committee on TA, the General Service Conference, and the General Service Office (GSO):

[Pamphlet P-83 Access to A.A.: Members share on Overcoming Barriers](#) – includes three stories: one from a person who had a traumatic brain injury, another from a member who had a stroke and a third from a member who had an acquired brain injury. All wrote movingly about their experience in A.A. and particular challenges they faced.

In regional correspondence, GSO Staff Members have shared with sponsors who asked for experience about how to work with members who were unable to read, and about working with members who have other cognitive challenges. While the specific circumstances were different, the desire to be of service and carry the A.A. message of recovery and hope was the same.

1998 – The GSO developed a new service piece, "A.A. Literature and Audiovisual Material for Special Needs" catalog.

1998 – The GSO newsletter, [Box 4-5-9](#) featured a story about the new Special Needs catalog, and highlighted some of the challenges faced by some members, including one with aphasia and others with brain injuries.

2000 – An article in [Box 4-5-9](#) detailed the work of the Southeast New York Special Needs committee, including the experience of members in an A.A. group geared to the developmentally disabled.

2007 - In the Oct/Nov issue of [Box 4-5-9](#), a member wrote in to describe the work her home group had done to start and support a meeting in a local facility dedicated to those with head-traumas. Two takeaways from that experience included the observation that some of the members with head traumas seemed to think in very concrete terms, for

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instance, wondering why the pocket size version of Alcoholics Anonymous could still be called a “big book.” Another helpful observation was that in that particular meeting, members took more time with each step, spending three weeks on it instead of the usual one.

2009 Advisory Action: The committee’s scope be expanded to include service to Special Needs/Accessibilities committees and that the name of the committee be changed to the Conference Committee on Treatment Facilities/Special Needs/Accessibilities.

2009 - The trustees’ CPC-TA committee accepted responsibility for the 2009 Conference Advisory Action which requested development of a recovery pamphlet for newcomers or prospective members with special needs to include stories solicited from A.A. members with a wide variety of challenges, such as autism, brain damage, learning disabilities, blindness, deafness or hearing impairment, confinement to wheelchairs, etc.

2009 – The trustees’ CPC-TA committee requested that the committee secretary begin soliciting stories through letters to Special Needs Committees, delegates, and an article in *Box 4-5-9*. and that the Director of Publications prepare an outline of the proposed pamphlet to submit to the November 1, 2009, meeting of the committee.

In November 2009, the trustees’ CPC-TA committee heard a progress report on story submissions for the proposed Special Needs pamphlet from the secretary, and viewed with appreciation the outline for the proposed pamphlet submitted by the Publications Department. They asked that the Twelve Concepts be included along with the Steps and Traditions in the final pamphlet, and suggested that particular attention be paid to inclusivity in all language used throughout the pamphlet.

2010 - Upon review of the Special Needs Kit and Workbook, the committee suggested that, “Shared experience with carrying the A.A. message to those with less visible challenges such as illiteracy, autism, etc., be gathered and added to the Special Needs Workbook when feasible.”

2011 - The Fall 2011 issue of *Box 4-5-9*, featured a story that highlighted the process of developing ‘A.A. for the Alcoholic With Special Needs. The article specifically mentions that when stories from the Fellowship were collected for the pamphlet, they included some from members with autism, brain damage and learning disabilities, among others.

2011 Advisory Action: The recovery pamphlet “A.A. for the Alcoholic with Special Needs” be approved.

2011 Advisory Action - The name of the committee be changed to the Conference Committee on Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities and that these changes be reflected in the committee’s Composition, Scope and Procedure.

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2011 Committee Consideration - The committee suggested that when the pamphlet for alcoholics with special needs is created, formats for alcoholics who are deaf, blind, or have learning challenges be produced as soon as fiscally possible.

2012 - The trustees' CPC/TA committee reviewed with appreciation a progress report on the pamphlet "A.A. For the Alcoholic With Special Needs" in formats for alcoholics who are deaf, blind or have learning challenges and looks forward to an update at their January 2013 meeting.

2012 - Conference committee on TA report : The committee reviewed with appreciation the final report on the pamphlet "A.A. For the Alcoholic with Special Needs" in formats for blind, deaf or learning challenged A.A. members.

2013 – Conference committee on TA report: The committee reviewed the report on the DVD version of the pamphlet "A.A. For the Alcoholic with Special Needs" formatted for alcoholics who are blind, deaf or learning challenged and expressed deep appreciation for the availability of the item. There was a concern expressed whether a DVD in American Sign Language (ASL) and with subtitles in English serves the needs of French and Spanish language-based members.

2014 – [About A.A. - Spring 2014 - A.A. for the Alcoholic With Special Needs](#). In this edition of the newsletter for professionals, explains how A.A. carries the message to alcoholics with a variety of needs, including those with brain injuries.

2016 Advisory Action: The term "Special Needs" be removed from the name of the Conference Committee on Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities and throughout the committee's Composition, Scope and Procedure. The new name of the committee will be the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

2017 Advisory Action: It was recommended that: the pamphlet "A.A. for the Alcoholic with Special Needs" be approved with suggested editorial changes and be retitled "Accessibility for All Alcoholics."

2016 Advisory Action: The title of the pamphlet "Accessibility for All Alcoholics" be changed to "Access to A.A.: Members Share on Overcoming Barriers."

2018 Advisory Action: The proposed changes by the trustees' Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities to the pamphlet "Accessibility for All Alcoholics" be approved with additional revisions.

2018 Advisory Action: The Scope of the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities be expanded as follows (additions in bold):

The purpose of a Treatment and Accessibilities committee is to coordinate the work of individual A.A. members and groups interested in carrying our message of recovery

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to alcoholics in a wide variety of treatment settings, and to set up means of “bridging the gap” from the treatment setting to the A.A. Fellowship. In addition, the committee supports the work of individual A.A. members and groups serving those who experience barriers to accessing the A.A. message and participating in A.A.’s Three Legacies — Recovery, Unity, and Service. Finally, the committee supports the work of individual A.A. members and groups striving to ensure that A.A. members who live in under-served or remote communities — communities difficult to reach because of geography, language or culture — have access to the A.A. message.

2021 -_The trustees’ CPC-TA committee suggested updating the A.A. Guidelines on Accessibilities to include references to intellectual disabilities and learning difficulties. The committee requested ongoing reviews and revision of materials to replace the term “special needs” with “accessibilities” across all A.A. literature, including service material.

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ITEM G: Review progress report on Bridging the Gap Workbook and other service materials.

Background notes:

From the January 29, 2023, trustees' Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities

The committee discussed the progress report on the Bridging the Gap Service Materials.

The discussion focused on Bridging the Gap having overlap with service work in Treatment and Corrections.

The committee discussed whether it was appropriate for them to clarify those distinctions or whether it was more appropriate to obtain local and regional input on the differences in how Bridging the Gap work is carried out. The committee requested that the staff secretary update the progress report requesting sharing from the Fellowship on how Bridging the Gap works in local areas to inform the development of our Bridging the Gap service materials.

The committee **agreed to forward** to the 2023 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities the Bridging the Gap Service Materials report. The committee is requesting local committee member input on the following questions:

- What service materials are needed to effectively do the work of Bridging the Gap across the fellowship?
- Discuss the present relevance of Bridging the Gap service to the fellowship and comment on its future direction.

From the July 31, 2022, trustees' Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities

The committee reviewed the progress report regarding Bridging the Gap service material and the development of a Bridging the Gap Workbook. The committee expressed appreciation for the ongoing work and looks forward to a progress report at the October 2022 meeting.

From the January 30, 2022, trustees' Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities

The committee reviewed drafts of the service materials titled, "Bridging the Gap Workbook" and "Bridging the Gap/Temporary Contact Guidelines." The committee discussed and approved the service materials and requested the staff secretary to forward the drafts to Publishing for development. The committee

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looks forward to a progress report at the July 2022 meeting.

From the August 1, 2021, trustees' Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities

The committee reviewed a progress report from the executive editor on the pamphlet "Bridging the Gap" and looks forward to a draft or progress report at the October 2021 meeting.

From the January 31, 2021, trustees' Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed the grid of shared experience on Bridging the Gap (BTG) by local committees. The committee asked that the staff secretary share the grid with G.S.O.'s Executive Editor for use in updating the BTG pamphlet and other service material. The committee looks forward to receiving updated BTG materials at the July 2021 meeting.

From the November 1, 2020, trustees' Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee asked the secretary to bring back draft language reflecting local shared experience for a Workbook and G.S.O. Guidelines on Bridging the Gap to the January 2021 meeting.

From the August 1, 2020, trustees' Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee discussed the 2020 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities committee considerations. The committee asked the staff secretary to work with the Publishing department for a draft update or progress report to be provided at the 2020 October meeting.

From the 2020 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities Committee Consideration:

The committee suggested that the trustees' C.P.C/T.A. committee develop a Bridging the Gap Committee Workbook and provide a progress report to the 2021 General Service Conference. The committee suggested that the shared experience included in the workbook include a list of BTG temporary contacts available from G.S.O.

From the February 2, 2020, trustees' Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:

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The committee considered a request to create a Bridging the Gap Workbook and **agreed to forward** the request to the 2020 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities. The committee noted that some local A.A. communities do not participate in Bridging the Gap or Temporary Contact activities due to limited access of shared experience in this service area.

Background:

1. Progress report - Bridging the Gap service materials.

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**2023 Trustees' Treatment and Accessibilities Committee
Progress report on Bridging the Gap service materials
January 29, 2023**

Following the 2020 General Service Conference, GSO staff and trustees' CPC-T-A began work on a Bridging the Gap workbook, as suggested by the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

The preparatory work done included collecting sharing from the Fellowship on Bridging the Gap, considering locally produced workbooks in use by Bridging the Gap committees in different parts of the country and a review of other service material that refers to Bridging the Gap, including:

- F-222 Temporary Contact Volunteers - Bridging the Gap
- P-49 Bridging the Gap (under review as agenda item TA-H)
- F-183 A.A. Temporary Contact/Bridging the Gap Request - Inside
- F-184 A.A. Temporary Contact/Bridging the Gap Volunteer - Outside
- M-40i Treatment Workbook
- M-45i Corrections Workbook

Based on the review of the current service materials referenced above, it was unclear whether a Workbook was needed, or whether the existing service materials might be updated to meet the needs of members (perhaps with the addition of G.S.O. Guidelines for Bridging the Gap).

Accordingly, the trustees' committee on CPC, Treatment and Accessibility refer this matter to the 2023 Conference committee on Treatment and Accessibility for input and guidance from the Fellowship. Sharing around the following questions would be particularly helpful:

- What service materials are needed to effectively do the work of Bridging the Gap across the fellowship?
- Discuss the present relevance of Bridging the Gap service to the Fellowship and comment on its future direction.

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ITEM H: Review progress report on pamphlet update, “Bridging the Gap”

January 29, 2023, trustees’ committee on CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed the progress report on the pamphlet “For Professionals: Bridging the Gap to Help Alcoholics.”

The staff secretary provided the committee with a historical recap that highlighted the fact that there had been a change in the development of the pamphlet that shifted the direction from an inner facing pamphlet to an outward facing one.

The committee **agreed to forward** to the 2023 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities the “Bridging the Gap to Help Alcoholics” the report along with the two drafts of the “Bridging the Gap” pamphlet. The committee is requesting that the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities offer input on the pamphlet direction, with the suggestion that it might be beneficial to gather shared experience from the Fellowship to inform their decision-making on the target audience.

October 31, 2022, trustees’ committee on CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed a draft pamphlet “For Professionals How A.A. ‘Bridges the Gap’ to Help Alcoholics” provided by the Publishing Department and suggested final edits. A committee member shared that the “Useful links section” of the pamphlet includes a website that could be improved for useability and functionality. The committee requested the following updates:

- On page 4 remove the word “experienced” from the description of A.A. members.
- On page 4 remove the parentheses around the sentence, “In Alcoholics Anonymous, sponsors are A.A. members who guide other alcoholics through the Twelve Step program of recovery.”
- Add a section on page 7 titled “Other useful links” and include a clean URL for Bridging the Gap under this new section.

The committee looks forward to a final draft or progress report at the January 2023 meeting.

July 31, 2022, trustees’ committee on CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed the progress report from the Executive Editor regarding the draft pamphlet “For Professionals How A.A. ‘Bridges the Gap’ to Help Alcoholics.” The committee expressed appreciation for the ongoing work and looks forward to a final draft or progress report at the October 2022 meeting.

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January 30, 2022, trustees' committee on CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed the progress report of the draft pamphlet "For Professionals: How A.A. 'Bridges the Gap' to Help Alcoholics." The committee requested that the staff secretary provide edit suggestions to Publishing for the next iteration of a draft pamphlet. The committee looks forward to a progress report for a revised draft pamphlet at the July 2022 meeting.

October 31, 2021, trustees' committee on CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed the draft pamphlet, "For Professionals: "Bridging the Gap" to Help Alcoholics."

The committee agreed to continue reviewing the draft pamphlet and forward any considerations for revisions to the staff secretary by mid-December. The committee noted that the term "inmate" is used and requested that it be revised to the updated term of "person in custody."

The committee requested that the staff secretary send a memo to G.S.O. Publishing to note this change and any subsequent suggestions received by committee members for ongoing work of the draft pamphlet. The committee looks forward to a revised draft pamphlet or update report to be provided at their January 2022 meeting.

August 1, 2021, trustees' committee on CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed a progress report from the executive editor on the pamphlet "Bridging the Gap" and looks forward to a draft or progress report at the October 2021 meeting.

January 31, 2021, trustees' committee on CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed a progress report from G.S.O.'s Publishing department regarding the update to the pamphlet "Bridging the Gap" and provided clarification about the target audience for this pamphlet. The committee expressed appreciation for the ongoing work and looks forward to a progress report or draft at the July 2021 meeting.

The committee reviewed the grid of shared experience on Bridging the Gap (BTG) by local committees. The committee asked that the staff secretary share the grid with G.S.O.'s Executive Editor for use in updating the BTG pamphlet and other service material. The committee looks forward to receiving updated BTG materials at the July 2021 meeting.

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November 1, 2020, trustees' committee on CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed draft language for the update to the pamphlet, "Bridging the Gap," and requested a revised draft be brought to the January 2021 meeting.

August 1, 2020, trustees' committee on CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee discussed the 2020 Advisory Action to update the pamphlet "Bridging the Gap," and reviewed a sample of updated language. The committee asked the staff secretary to work with the Publishing department for a draft update or progress report to be provided at the 2020 October meeting.

2020 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities Advisory Action

The committee recommended that the pamphlet "Bridging the Gap" be updated for currency and inclusion to reach a broader scope of treatment settings about temporary contact services, and that a progress report or draft be brought to the 2021 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

February 2, 2020, trustees' committee on CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities

The committee reviewed and discussed progress on reviewing materials related to Bridging the Gap activities and **agreed to forward** the report to the 2020 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities. The committee noted samples that demonstrated current and inclusive language and encompassed possible opportunities for Bridging the Gap and Temporary Contact services.

November 3, 2019, trustees' committee on CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed and discussed the draft language provided by the staff secretary for the Bridging the Gap pamphlet and other service material for Bridging the Gap service. The draft includes language describing Bridging the Gap service from correctional facilities and inclusive language to describe alcoholics that may request this service. The committee asked the secretary to continue to work with the Publishing Department and bring back a revised draft to the February 2020 meeting.

July 28, 2019, trustees' committee on CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities

The committee discussed the 2019 Conference Treatment and Accessibilities additional committee consideration to include experiences about Bridging the Gap service from correctional facilities. The committee asked the staff secretary to forward the sharing to Publishing to create draft language for the November 2019 meeting.

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From the 2019 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities Committee Consideration:

The committee considered revising the pamphlet “Bridging the Gap Between Treatment and A.A. Through Contact Programs” to include related corrections activities and agreed with the concept.

The committee requested that the trustees’ Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities consult with the trustees’ Committee on Corrections to review all treatment and corrections committee literature from G.S.O. related to bridging the gap and temporary contact activities with the following in mind:

- How treatment and corrections material can be updated for currency and inclusion;
- How this material could be combined;
- What material might be discontinued, and;
- How the combined material might be broadened to encompass the full range of possibilities in which a temporary contact might be useful.

The committee requested that a report be brought to the 2020 Conference Treatment and Accessibilities committee.

January 27, 2019, trustees’ CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee

The committee **agreed to forward** to the 2019 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities the proposed Conference agenda item to consider revising the “Bridging the Gap” pamphlet to be broad and inclusive. The committee noted the request to broaden the focus of the pamphlet to include local Bridging the Gap work for correctional facilities.

Background:

1. Progress Report on pamphlet update, “Bridging the Gap”
2. Draft pamphlet, For Professionals: How A.A. “Bridges the Gap” to Help Alcoholics *(for committee eyes only)*
3. Draft pamphlet “Bridging the Gap” *(for committee eyes only)*

**2023 Trustees' Treatment and Accessibilities Committee
Progress report on Bridging the Gap service materials
January 29, 2023**

Following the 2019 and 2020 General Service Conferences, GSO staff and trustees' CPC-T-A continued work on updating the Bridging the Gap pamphlet, as suggested by the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

As part of this editorial work, two versions of a revised pamphlet have been drafted. The first is an update to the existing pamphlet, P-49 "Bridging the Gap." This update reflects changes suggested by the 2019 and 2020 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities. (See Item H, Doc.3, committee eyes only)

The second draft is a re-organized and re-focused pamphlet retitled "For Professionals: How Bridging the Gap Helps Alcoholics" (See Item H, Doc.2, committee eyes only)

After reviewing the background and the history and actions related to Bridging the Gap, the Trustees' CPC/TA Committee requests the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities discuss and provide input regarding the focus of this pamphlet.

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2023 Conference Committee on Treatment/Accessibilities

ITEM I: Review progress report on G.S.O.'s Guidelines for Remote Communities

Background notes:

From the 2019 Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed a draft Remote Communities Kit and agreed that there is a need for this new material. The committee suggested that before the Kit is made available that a guideline or workbook be developed for inclusion. The guideline or workbook might use a current Remote Communities workbook as an example.

The committee also suggested that the guideline or workbook include a list of available material, with details, including the intended audience, and suggestions for when and why it might be used. The committee forwarded a list of additional pamphlets and service material to be considered for inclusion in the Kit. The committee suggested that the trustees' committee not include the paper copy of the pamphlet in the Kit but provide a list of material by category and purpose, linked to encourage digital use.

The committee noted the availability and relevance of past articles in Grapevine, *Box 4-5-9*, and *About A.A.*, and requested that the trustees' Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities and staff work with AA Grapevine to make past Remote Communities articles from Grapevine available for those involved in Remote Communities service.

From the November 1, 2020, trustees' Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed activities related to Remote Communities Committees, including a verbal report provided by the staff secretary. The committee noted that the "A.A. Guidelines: Remote Communities Committees" are being revised by the Publishing department. The committee expressed appreciation for the ongoing work to develop the Remote Communities workbook and kit, making them available in contemporary ways. The committee requested that the staff secretary provide an update to the January 2021 meeting.

From the 2021 Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:

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The committee was provided an update on the Remote Communities guidelines and look forward to a draft version.

From the August 1, 2021, trustees' C.P.C./ Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee reviewed a progress report from the executive editor on A.A. Guidelines on Remote Communities and looks forward to a draft or progress report at the October 2021 meeting.

From the December 8, 2021, trustees' C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee discussed the Remote Committee Guidelines and requested that the staff secretary continue to work with publishing to develop a draft for Remote Committee Guidelines. The committee looks forward to a progress report at their January 2022.

From the January 30, 2022, trustees' C.P.C./Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed and discussed "A.A. Guidelines for the Remote Community." The committee suggested several edits and requested that the edits be captured in a memorandum to Publishing. The committee agreed to forward the memorandum and the draft "A.A. Guidelines for the Remote Community" to the 2022 Conference Committee on Treatment/Accessibilities for review because it is new service material.

From the 2022 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities Committee Consideration:

The committee discussed the draft version of the A.A. Guidelines for Remote Communities and offered the following suggestions:

- The committee encourages G.S.O. Publishing to continue to maintain the most current cultural terminologies.
- Remove the names from the sharing in the guidelines (though currently anonymity protected; highlight the message rather than the name).
- Remove the section "Three Challenges" and replace it with the title "Challenges in carrying the message to underserved populations" and include broader sharing with culturally sensitive language.
- Remove the current sharing on sponsorship from the section "Spanish-Speaking Women in A.A. Remote Community" and include sharing that positively highlights the importance of sponsorship.
- Also include in the section "Spanish-Speaking Women in A.A. Remote Community" information on special-interest meetings/groups, like what is shared in the Conference-approved pamphlets "Hispanic Women in A.A."

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- and “Women and A.A.”
- Expand the section and title on online group/meeting resources to include a broader cross-section of digital sharing and resources.

The committee asked that the staff secretary to revise the service piece and looks forward to it being made available to Remote Committees once the updates have been made.

From the July 30, 2022, trustees’ C.P.C/Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee reviewed the Conference committee consideration on the “A.A. Guidelines on Remote Communities.” The committee suggested that the staff secretary perform a thorough review of the guidelines before moving forward. The committee looks forward to a new draft at the October 2022 meeting.

From the October 30, 2022, trustees’ C.P.C/Treatment and Accessibilities:

The staff secretary shared about the ongoing progress on the A.A. Guidelines on Remote Communities. The committee looks forward to a progress report at the January 2023 meeting.

From the January 29, 2023, trustees’ C.P.C/Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee discussed the progress report on the “G.S.O.’s Guidelines for Remote Communities.” There was an in-depth discussion on the definition of a remote community. Committee members expressed appreciation for the Guideline and mentioned that they appreciated the diverse communities it reflects.

The committee **agreed to forward** to the 2023 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities the G.S.O.’s Guidelines for Remote Communities report for review and discussion because it is new service material.

Background:

1. [Draft G.S.O.’s Guidelines for Remote Communities](#)

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G.S.O.'s Guidelines for Remote Communities

Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an informed group conscience.

CARRYING THE MESSAGE TO ALCOHOLICS IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES

The material in these Guidelines has come from the experience and growing pains of A.A. Accessibilities committees, Loners and Internationalists and Remote Communities Committees.

We are privileged to share it with A.A.s throughout the United States and Canada who are carrying our message to alcoholics who would not otherwise be reached. Additional information is available in the Remote Communities section of G.S.O.'s website at www.aa.org or you can contact G.S.O.'s Accessibilities Desk (access@aa.org) directly.

WHAT IS A REMOTE COMMUNITY?

In Toronto in July 1996, the first Remote Communities Conference was held with 15 Delegates. It was determined that a remote community was any community to which it was difficult to carry the message because of language, culture or geography.

PURPOSE

Remote Communities Committees and Accessibilities Committees work to ensure access to A.A. is available to those in underserved or remote communities. Committees focus on overcoming barriers that could make it hard to access the A.A. program – barriers such as geography, language or culture.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Perhaps the first step would be to contact your local area committee and, if there is an existing Accessibilities committee, they will connect you to the members doing work with Remote Communities. Because there are so many kinds of remote communities, there is no one-size-fits-all way to get started. If there is no work being done with Remote Communities in your local area, you may have to work with other trusted servants to determine what kinds of outreach is needed.

- To reach groups that are geographically isolated, you might check with your Central office/ Intergroup office, Delegate or other Area trusted servants. They may know of groups or

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individuals who find it difficult to attend local A.A. events because of the distance or expense of traveling.

- To reach members who are physically, culturally or linguistically isolated, working with CPC committees to share the A.A. message with professionals who work with the elderly, clergy, social service staffers, medical providers or others who come into contact with individuals who might be isolated could be a useful first step.
- If you know there is a community of people in your area who do not speak the language(s) spoken at local AA meetings, you might work with local intergroup or literature chair to acquire A.A. materials in those other languages.
- Additional suggestions for Remote Communities work can be found in the Accessibilities Workbook and the Accessibilities Kit.

EXPERIENCE STRENGTH AND HOPE: SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCESSING REMOTE COMMUNITIES

“In areas where these populations are not being reached, Accessibilities Committees may support the work of reaching out to Remote members in a number of ways:

- Organize regular telephone/teleconferencing/video conferencing meetings with members in remote communities for both recovery and service meetings.
- Identify community resources and leaders within specific ethnic and cultural communities, such as local media outlets; places of worship; medical providers, social clubs, and schools. Coordinate with C.P.C/P.I. committees to provide such culturally significant targets with P.S.A.s, A.A. literature and presentations, to help establish ongoing communication.
- Make sure there is an A.A. presence in underrepresented areas — consider starting meetings in communities where none exist.
- Keep local members informed regarding Regional or Local Forums or other A.A. service events that may be occurring in their areas.
- Provide regular reports — in accessible formats — of service workshops, district meetings, and other service information that will help keep these communities connected to the whole of A.A.

--Shared Experience from A.A. Members on Working with Remote Communities (Extracted from 2019 Remote Communities Communicator)

- Shared experience for carrying the message to members who are Deaf or hard of hearing, including how groups have used the services of professional ASL interpreters, can be found in the [G.S.O. Guidelines for Sharing the A.A. Message with the Alcoholic Who Is Deaf.](#)

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- Some communities have found it useful to budget funds specifically to help cover the travel costs for remote members to attend Round-ups, Assemblies, Conferences or Forums.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF REMOTE COMMUNITIES?

Language

- Individuals seeking help with a drinking problem who are not able to access the message in a language they can speak, read or understand.
- Other language access problems arise for members of the Deaf and Deaf-Blind communities in parts of the country where no ASL meetings are available.

Geography

- Those with accessibility challenges, including those who are homebound, or those who live in facilities like hospitals or nursing homes where there is no access to A.A.
- Geographically distant communities, for instance in northern Canada, Alaska or other rural parts of North America.
- Note: Those who are part of remote communities because of geography may not have access to the technologies (like high-speed internet) that make online meetings possible (see below).

Culture

- A.A. is a diverse fellowship which includes many different cultures and identities. While many alcoholics feel quite comfortable in any A.A. group, some AAs have shared that at times they find it easier to attend a special interest AA meeting for identification purposes as an alcoholic and to be able to be open about certain person experiences. For example, individuals might feel most comfortable sharing in a women's meetings, an LGBTQ A.A meeting, a young people's meeting or meetings designated as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color).
- Some individuals may face additional burdens of stigma because of religious or cultural prohibitions on consuming alcohol which can make identifying as an alcoholic particularly difficult.

In each of these cases, whether communities are remote because of language, culture or geography, Remote Communities trusted servants endeavor to work with those communities to offer "the hand of A.A." in whatever ways that community finds most useful and to learn from those individuals and members who are part of remote communities.

RELATIONSHIP TO ACCESSIBILITIES COMMITTEES

In many parts of the country, Remote Communities work falls under the umbrella of the Accessibilities Committee. In other places, two separate chairs may be elected, and encouraged to work together. In either case, they share much: both roles are focused on ensuring that everyone who wants it is able to access the message of hope and recovery from alcoholism through Alcoholics Anonymous.

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LONERS-INTERNATIONALISTS MEETING

One resource for A.A. members in Remote Communities is the Loners-Internationalists Meeting (LIM), a bimonthly postal mail and email meeting with sharing from Loners (individuals with no AA meetings nearby), Homers (individuals who are unable to attend AA meetings due to disability or circumstance), Internationalists (AA members on seagoing vessels for extended period), Port Contacts and Loner Sponsors. To join the Loners and Internationalists Meeting, [members just fill out a form](#) so that GSO staff can add them to the directory and share the bimonthly newsletter with them.

Coordinated by GSO, LIM is, at this time, only available in English. But members who speak languages other than English can contact GSO to learn about other resources that may be available in other parts of the A.A. world.

ONLINE RESOURCES AND OTHER TECHNOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE

There are many digital resources available online for Remote Communities that have access to the Internet. Many of these are available through the web site www.aa.org. For instance, on aa.org, members will find access to A.A. literature (both in free pdf form and online ordering for physical books and digital downloads.) The aa.org website also features video and audio content, and links to useful resources like the Meeting Guide App and tools for finding A.A. near you.

Video and audio content produced by Alcoholics Anonymous can also be found on YouTube.

The AA Grapevine has a separate website, where members can sign up for the digital or print version of the magazine, access Grapevine archives, listen to the Grapevine podcast and read stories on a variety of recovery from alcoholism-related topics.

One resource that has been particularly useful for many Remote Communities is the Online A.A. Intergroup (OIAA.org). As an Intergroup organization for meetings held online, OIAA and the many online meetings offer Remote members who have internet access (or phone access) a way to join groups, attend meetings, do service work and find fellowship.

RELATIONSHIP TO GSO

G.S.O. maintains a mailing list of area and district Accessibilities Committee chairpersons and Remote Communities chairpersons (in the U.S. and Canada). Committee chairpersons receive the Accessibilities Committee Workbook, and are on the mailing list for Box 4-5-9, which sometimes contains a section on Remote Communities.

SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCE

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Please keep in touch with the G.S.O. Accessibilities Desk (access@aa.org) to share your activities and experiences in carrying the A.A. message to Remote Communities. We look forward to hearing from you!

Some useful publications:

[A.A. for the Native North American \(P-21\)](#)

[A.A. for the Black and African American Alcoholic \(P-51\)](#)

[A.A. and the Armed Services \(P-50\)](#)

[A.A. for the Older Alcoholic \(P-22\)](#)

[Do You Think You're Different \(P-13\)](#)

[Many Paths to Spirituality\(P-84\)](#)

[Experience, Strength and Hope: A.A. for Alcoholics with Mental Health Issues \(P-84\)](#)

[Experience, Strength and Hope: LGBTQ Alcoholics in A.A. Experience, Strength and Hope:](#)

[Women in A.A. \(P-5\)](#)

[Experience, Strength and Hope: The "God" Word Agnostics and Atheist Members of A.A. \(P-86\)](#)

[Understanding Anonymity \(P-47\)](#)

[Young People and A.A. \(P-4\)](#)

CATALOG/ORDER FORMS:

[Literature Catalog \(includes A.A.W.S. and AA Grapevine material\) \(F-10\)](#)

AA GRAPEVINE RESOURCES (English and Spanish):

Other resources on the AA Grapevine website at <https://www.aagrapevine.org/>

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