

Al-Anon guidelines

The Shared Experience of Al-Anon and Alateen Members.

Guidelines for Newsletter Editors

G-21

A Newsletter Editor plays an important role in putting together a key source of information, unity, and harmony for a district, Area, or Al-Anon Information Service. The specific responsibilities of the Newsletter Editor and newsletter content criteria are determined by the group conscience of the service arm.

Purpose of a Newsletter

A newsletter is a vital communication link to help keep groups and members informed. Establishing individual newsletter guidelines can make it easier for an Editor to determine what information to include. An Assembly, district, or Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) may take a group conscience or create a task force to clarify specific purposes, such as to:

- encourage attendance at service events
- communicate local, Area, and AIS news
- attract Al-Anon members into service

Tip: Ask yourself why you are publishing this newsletter.

Who is the audience? What do they need? What would they like?

The Role of the Editor

- Follow guidelines established by the service arm publishing the newsletter.
- Provide clear communication, possibly working with a selection committee of two or more experienced Al-Anon members to select appropriate material.
- Encourage members to make it their newsletter by submitting information, reports, and service sharings.
- Determine the type of submissions that will be accepted and establish a due date for submissions.
- Use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- Use uniform terms as defined in the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27), "World Service Handbook" section, to provide clarity. For example, it can be confusing to use "section" or "zone" instead of "district" or "Area."
- Make sure "Al-Anon" and "Alateen" are always spelled correctly, with hyphens in the proper place.
- Always have someone else proof the final draft.

Tip: "Live and Let Live"—be tolerant of different styles, and communicate with the writer if substantial changes are needed.

Production

- Determine from the start if the newsletter will be published in hard copy, electronic copy, or both. Some content decisions will depend on the choice. (See "Anonymity" below.)
- Develop a production timeline and publication deadline. Use an organized, consistent format to aid readers.
- Include postal and/or on-line subscription information, as well as contact information for questions or submissions.
- Place the newsletter's title and date on each page so that if an article is copied, members will know the original source.
- Develop writing guidelines for announcements and notices, to encourage members to share local Al-Anon news. (Some Editors request that all items be submitted by mail, fax, e-mail, or flash drive.)
- Include standards for submissions (e.g., functions must be open to any member, etc.) and deadlines in the guideline.
- Generate enthusiasm and sustain interest in the contents by giving the newsletter an attractive, professional design, using an easy-to-read font and a variety of graphics.

Traditions and Policies

Anonymity - Be careful not to put the name "Al-Anon" or "Alateen" on the return address of any postal mailing of the newsletter or in the subject line of any e-mail to members. If the newsletter is distributed to anyone besides Al-Anon members, or is posted on a public access (non-password protected) Al-Anon Web site, do not include the last names or contact information of members. Further guidance regarding anonymity with electronic distribution can be found under "Anonymity" in the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27).

Tip: Include a little humor! Make it light! Make it interesting!

Affiliation - In keeping with Traditions Three and Six, carefully consider what could be interpreted as affiliation with and/or endorsement of outside entities. Publicize Al-Anon events or A.A. events with Al-Anon participation, per your district, AIS, or Area guidelines. Avoid the mention of outside events, functions, and retreats (even those geared primarily toward families and friends of alcoholics), including links to outside Web sites, unless announcing them as public outreach service opportunities (e.g., participating at an Al-Anon booth at a health fair). Also refer to or quote from only Conference Approved Literature and Al-Anon/Alateen service materials.

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Circulating Your Newsletter

- If mailing hard copies, consider limiting the number of pages to keep costs down.
- Some Areas give District Representatives (DRs) a sufficient supply of hard copies for the Group Representatives (GRs) in their districts, while others prefer to mail or e-mail the newsletter to each group or to AISs.
- Exchange newsletters with other Areas/AISs/districts.
- Please include the WSO on your mailing or e-mailing list.

Suggested Newsletter Topics

- Reports from Area officers: Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Secretary, Area Chairperson, and Treasurer's financial report. (Some Areas include group contributions.)

- Reports from Area and local Coordinators (Alateen, Public Outreach, Literature, *Forum*, Group Records, Archives, etc.).
- Reports from DRs and GRs: "District Happenings," meeting announcements, workshops, special events, group anniversaries, etc.
- Upcoming voting issues—publish job descriptions of officer and Coordinator positions before elections to encourage members to participate.
- Regular column(s) such as, "Things to Think About" or "Tips On..." (Consider the same heading with different subjects every issue.)
- Area Assembly highlights reports.
- Information and agendas for upcoming Assemblies/service meetings.
- Officers, Coordinators and DRs can be encouraged to submit sharings on how service helps recovery.
- Insert flyers about special Area/district workshops or events.

Tip: To handle a controversy, ask both sides to write. Featuring reports of personal grievances can result in disunity. Use judgment if a submission is inaccurate or misleading. Communicate with officers for guidance

When Space Allows

The following "fillers" can be used for reminders or to call attention to other important information:

- List of officers and Coordinators with phone numbers, addresses and/or e-mail addresses (not to be posted on public access Al-Anon Web sites).
- Reminder to groups about the importance of keeping their Current Mailing Address (CMA) information up to date.
- Importance of using the group registration number when communicating with the WSO.
- Suggested meeting topics using a variety of Conference Approved Literature (CAL).
- Features or reviews about Al-Anon and Alateen books, pamphlets, *The Forum*, "Inside Al-Anon Family Groups," and other WSO newsletters.
- Reminders of other information available from the WSO, including links to the Public Outreach and Members' Web sites (www.al-anon.alateen.org and www.al-anon.alateen.org/members).
- Information on Al-Anon conventions and TEAM events.
- A list of acronyms used commonly in Al-Anon.
- Notices about new literature, WSO guidelines, or specific pamphlets.

Tip: Share your excitement!