

Bridging the **GAP**

Becoming a temporary
contact between
treatment and A.A.



ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS® is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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www.aa.org

Bridging the Gap

What is Bridging the Gap?

Bridging the Gap is a temporary contact program for individuals getting out of treatment or other facilities. A separate program, "Contact upon release" has been created for those leaving correctional facilities.*

The concept behind "Bridging the Gap" (BTG) is as old as Alcoholics Anonymous itself — one drunk talking to another, each reinforcing the other's understanding that they can find a way to face life sober, and build meaningful relationships without alcohol. In order to bridge the gap, A.A. members have volunteered to be temporary contacts and introduce newcomers to Alcoholics Anonymous.

How Does Bridging the Gap Work?

- Bridging the Gap can provide a temporary contact for alcoholics in treatment centers, medical facilities, crisis centers, detox centers or other facilities. The intent of Bridging the Gap is to provide the recently released or discharged alcoholic with temporary help for a limited time. Keep in mind that this is basic Twelfth Step work.
- Experience suggests that it is best for a BTG contact to be accompanied by another A.A. member when meeting the newcomer.
- Experience also suggests that temporary contact and newcomers be matched by gender, and if possible, by age. Concerns about safety are of particular importance to A.A. members. When safety concerns arise, local or area committees at the district, area, intergroup or central office should be consulted. Of course, in an emergency please contact 911.
- In some parts of the U.S. and Canada, BTG operates as a stand-alone committee, while in others Bridging the Gap is part of the work of a Treatment or Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) committee. In still others, the work is organized by a local intergroup committees or central offices. Regardless of how it is organized, all share the

*For more information on serving people in correctional settings, please contact your local Corrections Committee. (Link for online pdf — <https://www.aa.org/aa-corrections-prerelease-contact-information-outside>)

basic goal of providing a bridge that helps newcomers find Alcoholics Anonymous.

- In many areas, liaisons have been established among different A.A. service committees. There are many instances of overlapping responsibilities. It should be clearly established that A.A. committees are not in competition with each other. Local circumstances determine who does what.
- It may be helpful for you as a temporary contact to attend Bridging the Gap workshops or attend meetings of your local area's Treatment or H&I committees.

How does Bridging the Gap work with newcomers?

- Make contact with the newcomer while the person is still in treatment. To avoid any misunderstandings, explain clearly that this is a temporary arrangement.
- Explain to the newcomer what meeting formats are available and explain the difference between open and closed meetings.
- Accompany the newcomer to a variety of meetings, including online meetings. Give the newcomer an A.A. meeting schedule or show them how to use the Meeting Guide app.
- Introduce the newcomer to A.A. Conference-approved literature (particularly the Big Book). Share copies of AA Grapevine/La Viña and/or introduce the newcomer to the AA Grapevine podcast and app. Explain the importance of joining and participating in a home group.
- Explain sponsorship to the newcomer, referring to the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship," and perhaps help the newcomer find a sponsor.

Who can get involved with Bridging the Gap?

- Local BTG committees sometimes set sobriety requirements for their temporary contacts. Active involvement in Alcoholics Anonymous is suggested.
- A.A. temporary contacts need not have experience with treatment settings. Experience as an alcoholic in A.A. is the primary qualification needed.

How do Bridging the Gap committees work with treatment centers or other facilities?

- Keeping in mind A.A.'s tradition of non-affiliation (Tradition Six), A.A. members who are Bridging the Gap committee members or temporary contacts often approach staff at treatment centers and other facilities to introduce them to A.A. and to the Bridging the Gap program. In some places, this is done in collaboration with local CPC (Cooperation with the Professional Community) or Treatment Committees.
- Remember: the professionals who run treatment centers and other facilities are in charge of their patients or clients and are responsible for them. While we cannot compromise our A.A. Traditions, we should remember that we are guests of the facility and must abide by its rules. We are there to carry the A.A. message to the newcomer, and to answer any questions regarding the A.A. program of recovery and the A.A. way of life.
- A.A. temporary contacts should be encouraged to utilize the Twelve Traditions in their interactions with staff and newcomers. Statements that may be interpreted as medical or psychological diagnosis or advice on medication should be avoided. We are there only to share our experience of staying away from one drink, one day at a time, through the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Many A.A. temporary contacts report that it may take months of hard work to establish a relationship with a facility and that they are careful not to destroy that trust and interfere with carrying the message. In all contacts or activities with treatment settings, it is extremely important to be punctual, respectful and professional.
- It may be useful to refer to the A.A. flyer "Information on Alcoholics Anonymous," particularly the section on what A.A. does and does not do (for example, A.A. does not provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money or other welfare or social services).
- In some places, local service committees present an A.A. informational meeting for staff and/or clients at the facility.
- Remember, no one speaks for A.A. as a whole. When we carry the A.A. message to those in treat-

ment, we are just one drunk talking with another. How we look, act and talk may be all they are going to know about Alcoholics Anonymous.

- Remember, the goal of both A.A. and the treatment settings is the same — the recovery of the alcoholic.

If you would like to get involved:

If you would like to help in this very important Twelfth Step work, please complete this form and give it to your group’s general service representative (GSR), or mail it to your area Treatment committee or Bridging the Gap committee.

Or you may send it by email or postal mail to the Treatment Desk, General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163, (or tf@aa.org) so that GSO can forward the information to your local Bridging the Gap or Treatment Committee.

For more information about this program, please also read A.A. Guidelines for Bridging the Gap.

DATE _____

FIRST NAME _____

LAST NAME _____

AGE RANGE:
 Under 21 21-35 36-60 over 60

GENDER _____
(e.g. Male, Female, Non-binary)

LANGUAGE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE OR PROVINCE _____

ZIP OR MAIL CODE _____

PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

HOME GROUP _____

HOME LOCATION _____

A.A. PUBLICATIONS Below is a partial listing of A.A. publications. Complete order forms are available from the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. Telephone: (212) 870-3400. Website: www.aa.org

BOOKS

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS

BOOKLETS

LIVING SOBER
CAME TO BELIEVE

PAMPHLETS

ACCESS TO A.A.: MEMBERS SHARE ON OVERCOMING BARRIERS
DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DIFFERENT?
ABOUT A.A.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT A.A.
THIS IS A.A.
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SPONSORSHIP
THE A.A. GROUP
PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL
THE A.A. MEMBER—MEDICATIONS AND OTHER DRUGS
A.A. IN TREATMENT SETTINGS
BRIDGING THE GAP

For Professionals:

A.A. IN YOUR COMMUNITY
A BRIEF GUIDE TO A.A.
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AS A RESOURCE FOR
THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL

VIDEOS (available on www.aa.org)

HOPE: ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

For Professionals:

A.A. VIDEO FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

PERIODICALS

AA GRAPEVINE (monthly, www.aagrapevine.org)
LA VIÑA (bimonthly, in Spanish, www.aalavina.org)

Meeting Guide App:



<https://www.aa.org/treatment-committees>

A DECLARATION OF UNITY

This we owe to A.A.'s future: To place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come.

I am responsible...

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there.

And for that: **I am responsible.**

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