

CONFIDENTIAL: 73rd General Service Conference Background

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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