

# Safety and A.A.:

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## Our common Welfare

SMF-209 Revisions 2017, 2021, 2022

Chamille T  
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Area 49, Panel 73

# OK, But what IS service material?

## Conference Approved Literature

The term “Conference-approved” describes written or audiovisual material approved by the Conference for publication by G.S.O. This process assures that everything in such literature is in accord with A.A. principles. Conference-approved material always deals with the recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous or with information about the A.A. Fellowship... General Service Conference approval is a lengthy review process that can take years for longer projects, with several stages of committee evaluation along the way. (SMF-29)

## Grapevine Literature

Since Grapevine comes out 12 times a year, and the Conference meets only once a year, the magazine would never come off the press if it had to go through the Conference review process. However, the Conference has always supported the concept of Grapevine and, in 1986, a Conference Advisory Action specifically addressed the issue of Conference approval... By extension La Viña is recognized in the same way.

## Service Materials (Safety Card F-211, Safety Flyer F-228, Safety Material SMF-209)

# Why does this matter? I have questions...

1. Our common welfare should come first; **personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.**
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a **loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.** Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The **only requirement** for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. **Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.**
5. Each group has but one **primary purpose**—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought **never be organized;** but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has **no opinion on outside issues;** hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on **attraction rather than promotion;** we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place **principles before personalities.**

# Why does this matter? I have questions...

## Motions

- I motion that the Diversity and Inclusion section from the 2021 edition of Safety and AA: Our Common Welfare replace the Participation and Inclusion section from the 2022 edition in the 2023 edition and that GSO commit to standing for diversity and inclusion and against racism, transphobia and all other forms of oppression within AA.
- We motion that the 2021 edition of Safety and AA: Our Common Welfare be brought back to replace the 2022 edition.
- We want a new Safety and AA: Our Common Welfare brochure that uses some of the wording and concepts from the 2021 brochure regarding race and gender.
- We would like to make a motion that GSO bring back the 2021 version of SMF-209, or create a new pamphlet on safety as close to it as possible. The 2022 version is too big a departure, we feel.

## F-228 Safety and A.A. Flyer

... As embodied in the Fourth Tradition, the formation and operation of an A.A. group resides with the group conscience of its members. It is through an informed group conscience that A.A. groups find their solutions to group problems. Service entities such as areas, districts and intergroup/central offices are available to help provide A.A. services and shared experience. All groups and entities in A.A. are autonomous. There is no government within A.A. and no central authority to control or direct its members, but we do share our experience, strength and hope.

[https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/f-228\\_en\\_0422.pdf](https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/f-228_en_0422.pdf)

Discuss service piece, “Safety and A.A.: Our Common Welfare” (SMF-209) and its revisions.

Q. Have your group members read the service piece (SMF-209) from 2017? 2021? After it was revised in April 2022? What does your group think about this service piece?

2012 GSC-62

2013 Grapevine

2016 Grapevine

2016 Incident

2016 NYCPAA Petition

2022 LINK

# SMF-209 2017-2022

## Autonomy and Group Action

2017 ...There is no government within A.A. and no central authority, legal or otherwise, to control or direct the behavior of A.A. members...

2021 Added emphasis on the role of Informed Group Conscience

## A.A. Membership

2017 ...A.A.'s Third Tradition states that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. This brings an openness that helps to define our character as a diverse Fellowship...

2021 Added emphasis on the Group's authority to ask a person to leave the meeting space while also emphasizing that no AA entity may bar anyone from membership in AA.

2022 Autonomy and Group Action, AA Membership revised to **Group Safety and Unity**  
Increased emphasis placed on Tradition 5.

## Dealing with Disruptions

2017 ...there are a number of situations that can threaten group unity and challenge the safety of the group... groups and members always have the option to call the appropriate authorities if disruptive behavior continues or anyone's safety is at risk...

2021 Added emphasis the disruptive members may be asked to stop attending meetings for a period of time.

2022 Emphasis added on Traditions 5 and 3.

# SMF-209 2017-2022

## NEW Section on Safety and AA in the Digital Age

2021 Conveys that all principles that apply to in person meetings apply to virtual meetings

2022 Acknowledges the utility on online meetings

Alludes to the relationship between safety, Anonymity, and verbal guidelines.

## Group Safety and Unity

2017 ...Situations that groups have addressed through their group conscience include, sexual harassment or stalking; threats of violence; bullying; financial coercion; racial intolerance; sexual orientation or gender identification intolerance; pressuring A.A. members into a particular point of view or belief relating to medical treatments and/or medications, politics, religion, or other outside issues... predatory behavior, such as unwanted sexual attention or targeting vul-nerable members... *Anonymity is not a cloak protecting criminal or inappropriate behavior...*

2021 Added specific suggestions for targets of improper behavior.

Added stronger specific language about coercion outside formal meetings.

Added specific language about transactional services provided by members to members.

2022 Removed 2021 additions.



# SMF-209 2017-2022

## **A.A. and the Law**

2017 Common sense and experience suggest that A.A. membership does not grant immunity from local regulations and being at an A.A. meeting does not put anyone beyond the jurisdiction of law enforcement officers... No A.A. group has to tolerate illegal behavior and any activity within an A.A. meeting is subject to the same laws that apply outside the meeting.

2021 No Changes

2022 No Changes

## **Emergencies**

2017 Addressing an emergency situation is more important than continuing the meeting, and members should not hesitate to call emergency personnel in critical situations.

2021 Addressed aspects of the Pandemic and in-person meetings, made specific suggestions. Related to tradition 4, 5, 10.

2022 Substantially revised the information on Health Emergencies.  
Recommended groups avail themselves of the most up to date health information citing traditions as a guide, particularly 10.

## **Keeping the Focus on Our Primary Purpose**

2017 By maintaining order and safety in meetings, the group as a whole will benefit and members will be able to focus on recovery from alcoholism and a life of sobriety.

2021 Entire section removed.

# SMF-209 2017-2022

## Diversity and Inclusion

2017 Not Present

2021

Asserted the uniqueness of each member and group and the relationship of that to Tradition 3

Asserted (and validated) the safety concerns of people of color within our fellowship in specific terms.

Stated specifically that Racism in A.A. is a safety issue.

Acknowledged that everyone operates with some element of privilege, and its relation to tradition 5.

Acknowledged the experience of transgender and gender non-conforming members and its relation to tradition 10.

Asserted the utility of special interest groups and that they should always endeavor to respect the tradition 3.

2022

*Revised to **Participation** and Inclusion*

Eliminates all explicit examples and validation and reverts to a discussion of general principles as contained in Steps, Traditions and Concepts.

Provides numerous inspirational quotes from our literature.

Suggests a Group Inventory may be of use.

# SMF-209 2017-2022

## What Can Members Do?

2017 Assorted bullets

Includes Resource List

2021 Assorted bullets

Encouraged members to be mindful of who is not in the room and why.

Includes Resource List

2022 Revises What Can Members Do to “Helpful Suggestions and Reminders”

Eliminates encouragement of mindfulness above

Includes Resource List

SMF-209 2017-2022

Thank You!

