

HMB Area 48 | Reopening Service Piece

The purpose of this document is to provide information for groups to **CONSIDER** as they move towards reopening in-person meetings after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to the dynamics of the current situation, it is extremely important to have a group conscience meeting to plan & decide how reopening a meeting is to happen in a safe and spiritual way.

This service piece can be used for home groups, District meetings, Area meetings, Central Offices, and meetings brought into facilities such as treatment or correctional facilities. **It will be updated regularly so please check back as things continue to change. More will be revealed!**

As your group implements plans, procedures, updated text for meeting scripts, etc., please share with us so we can make your shared experience available to others. COVID19@aaahmbny.org

What You Will Find in This Document:

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Getting Started

It is suggested that each group be prepared in advance for reopening. Group members are encouraged to meet virtually & create their own reopening plan.

- Discuss with your landlord or facility contact:
 - If the facility is ready for meetings to return. **Having a key does not automatically mean that meetings can resume**, even if your group has a reopening plan.
 - Be prepared to consider other options if the group will not be able to return to the space
 - Ask if there are facility-specific procedures
 - Let them know the group's safety procedures (sanitizing, social distancing, masks, etc.)
- [Check statewide & regional regulations, & CDC guidelines](#)
"The law of the land does not stop at the door of AA."
- [Refer to guidance from Area / GSO / etc.](#) & reach out to District & Area with questions
- Do a walk-through to create a checklist of surfaces to disinfect & other safety procedures
- [Consider new or revised service opportunities](#)

Suggested Topics for Discussion as You Plan for Reopening

- **Meeting Procedures**
 - Safety protocols if someone comes to the meeting & is sick:
 - It is strongly encouraged that sick individuals do not attend meetings, to protect the well-being of other attendees, their families, the meeting space, etc.

- Provide them with phone numbers, Zoom meeting info, & other resources in a plastic baggie to take home with them
- Announce anonymously at the meeting & inform GSR / District that the group may have been exposed
- Consider collecting email addresses to alert members
- [Consider contact tracing](#)
- Meeting scripts can be adjusted to include:
 - Group & facility safety guidelines - explain that these are for everyone's safety
 - How to stay connected if not able to come to in-person meetings
 - Where group members can find [GSO, Area, & District resources & guidelines](#)
 - An explanation of [contact tracing](#) if your group decides to implement it
- Coffee / snacks:
 - Consider suspending hospitality for the time being
 - Consider a BYOB policy - "Bring your Own Beverage"
 - Consider having one person handle all hospitality while wearing [PPE \(face mask & gloves\)](#)
- Literature:
 - Consider a BYOB policy - "Bring your own Book"
 - Change format from passing book to one person reading
 - Disinfect shared literature before / after the meeting
 - Consider alternatives to sharing copies of [Grapevine / La Viña](#) (or have at least a 72 hour quarantine period for pre-owned or donated literature)
- Newcomers:
 - Pre-printed sheet of group members & phone numbers
 - Literature, phone numbers, pamphlets, & other resources in a plastic baggie
- Anniversaries:
 - Consider how to handle coins, cake, cards, etc.
- Finances:
 - Some of the items that the group discusses & determines to be requirements for reopening may require money (for example, the purchase of cleaning products or hand sanitizer). Ensure the group members and treasurer are informed of this.
- Accessibility:
 - [Virtual option](#) to increase accessibility
 - Small in-person meetings for homebound individuals & how to do so safely
- **Meeting Delivery Format**
 - Discuss whether your meeting will continue as an online meeting, [have a hybrid meeting](#), or meet in person only
 - Consider offering an online meeting at a day/time that does not conflict with other meetings
 - Consider adding a service position for chairing online meeting(s)
 - Update your meeting information with the District & Area Records in order to be listed accurately
 - Submit updated meeting information to Area Records at least 3 days prior to reopening. Online meeting change form: <https://aahmbny.org/new-group-form-group-change-form>
- **Accessibility - In-person Meetings with Virtual (online) Component**
 - Consider costs & availability of technology, wifi, tech knowledge, etc.
 - Consider whether the group will purchase their own account / technology or use a group member's.
 - Consider the anonymity of those attending the in-person meeting

- Consider adding service position(s), e.g. virtual meeting host(s), “spiritual bouncer” for Zoom bombers, and/or technology chair
- **7th Tradition - How to Pass the Basket:**
 - Consider having one group member carry the basket around
 - Provide gloves to the Chair / Treasurer (or whoever handles the money)
 - Consider [digital options](#) of contributing - hand out cards with digital basket info
- **PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)**
 - Executive orders have been issued requiring everyone to wear masks or face coverings in public
 - If someone does not wish to comply with wearing a mask, they could be brought outside the meeting space by two homegroup members to talk or given a list of phone numbers & virtual meetings
 - Meetings could provide masks - purchased or made by group members - for free or at cost
 - Make hand sanitizer available to attendees (alcohol-free suggested)
 - Provide gloves to trusted servants who handle meeting materials, 7th tradition, etc.
- **Social Distancing**
 - Maximum number of meeting attendees:
 - Check [NY state guidelines](#) on sizes of gatherings
 - Consider overflow space if too many people show up
 - Have 2 homegroup members go to overflow space with attendees
 - Check with facility on whether this is an option
 - Seating arranged 6 feet apart as per Executive Orders from the governor
 - Greeters: no handshakes or hugs
 - Consider how to end meeting with a socially distant circle
 - Consider fellowshiping before / after meeting in parking lot outside of meeting space
- **Contact Tracing**
 - *What is it? Trace & monitor everyone who came into contact with someone who is ill. Notify them of their exposure. Support the quarantine of contacts. Help ensure the safe, sustainable & effective quarantine of contacts to prevent additional transmission.*
 - Consider how your group would inform other members and attendees if someone attended and tested positive for COVID-19
 - Consider if / how your group will participate in contact tracing
 - Consider how your group will handle confidentiality / anonymity
 - Consider adding information in the meeting script to explain contact tracing
 - **NEW SUGGESTION:** Have attendees who wish to participate in contact tracing write their first name & phone number on a piece of paper. Provide extra pens or a way to sanitize pens between each user. That sheet of paper can then be placed in a dated & sealed envelope, to be opened only if there is a need to alert attendees about possible exposure at the meeting they attended. After 30 days, shred or safely discard the sealed envelope.

What to Do if an AA Member Tests Positive for COVID-19 & Attended Your Meeting

- Contact your local Department of Health for guidance
 - Note: You do **not** have to disclose it is an AA meeting - you can simply say “community organization”

- If the group has maintained a list of attendees & their contact information for the date(s) the positive-tested person attended the meeting, notify other attendees anonymously
 - The notification can be as simple as “A person who attended the meeting on <date> has tested positive for COVID-19 & you may wish to contact your physician for additional guidance”
 - Direct attendees to NYS COVID website & suggest 14-day self-isolation as recommended by CDC
- Consider suspending face-to-face meetings for a period of time
 - Consult local or state health department or CDC guidelines
- Provide basic, anonymous information about the incident to webmaster@aaahmbny.org, who can then post information on the COVID-19 page on the HMB Area Website for member awareness. Please include:
 - Group Name
 - Group Location
 - Date(s) that the individual attended the meeting

Consider New or Revised Service Opportunities

- **Spiritual Sanitizer / Safety Person:** wipe down contact surfaces such as chairs, tables, door knobs, etc. prior to & immediately after the meeting
- **Revised Greeter Duties:** hands out 7th Tradition card with online giving options, take-home meeting lists / literature / new meeting protocols / group member phone numbers
- **Designated 7th Tradition Basket Collector:** collects & handles money
- **Coffee server:** if group is still providing coffee, consider appointing one person to handle all coffee service
- **Revised Secretary Duties:** appoint notification duties (see above)
- **GSR / Group Contact:** if group does not have a GSR or group contact on file with Area / District, appoint one to stay abreast of changes / updates related to the Area & District
- **Technology Person:** maintain virtual component to meetings; host virtual meetings & oversee technical component; “spiritual bouncer” for meeting interruptions

Our Traditions

Above all, each group is asked to consider the AA Principles as the guiding force to a group conscience &, in particular, to pay close attention to the following Traditions:

Tradition 1 Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

Tradition 4 Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups, or A.A. as a whole.

Tradition 5 Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Tradition 7 Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Tradition 10 Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues, hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Tradition 11 Our public relations policy is based upon attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio & films.

Tradition 12 Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Glossary

- GSO - General Service Office
- CDC - Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
- DOH - Department of Health
- NYS - New York State

Resources

- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>
 - Contact Tracing - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/open-america/contact-tracing.html>
- NYS DOH Guidance on Gatherings: [Travel, Large Gatherings & Quarantines | Department of Health](#)
- NYS DOH Coronavirus Information: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>
- NYS.gov Reopening Phases: [Industries Reopening Phases](#)
- NY Forward (NYS Reopening Plan): <https://forward.ny.gov>

- GSO: Safety in AA https://www.aa.org/assets/en_us/smf-209_en.pdf
- GSO: Safety Card https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/f-211_SafetyCardforAAGroups.pdf
- GSO: COVID Guidance https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/update-on-covid-19-coronavirus
- NY Intergroup: <https://www.nyintergroup.org>
- Grapevine: <https://www.aagrapevine.org>

- Practicing the 7th Tradition in a Virtual Environment - https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/SMF-223-FAQonVirtualBasket_en.pdf
 - Options for Virtual Baskets & How to Set Them Up:
 - PayPal: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIAo43FEj-I>
 - Square: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqnKxrMo_uQ
 - Stripe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxJBOQPtcnk>
 - DonorBox: <https://donorbox.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/360020293192-How-To-Create-a-Donorbox-Org-Account>