

MARIN TELESERVICE GUIDELINES

"When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA to be there, and for that: I AM RESPONSIBLE."

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1. Welcome to Marin Teleservice!

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

If you are reading this packet, you are probably interested in Marin Teleservice. Perhaps you have already volunteered for a commitment or maybe you would like to know how Teleservice works and how you can get involved. We hope this packet is helpful to you, and on behalf of the fellowship we thank you for your interest in service to Alcoholics Anonymous!

What We Are:

Marin Teleservice is a telephone service that is available 24 hours a day to help alcoholics in need.

We refer callers to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and provide current AA meeting directory information. In addition, we see that 12-step workers are called to talk with and/or visit suffering alcoholics when needed.

We are sober alcoholics doing what we can to stay sober and to help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. It is important for us to remember

OFTEN, A PERSON'S FIRST INTRODUCTION TO AA IS THROUGH MARIN TELESERVICE!

What We Are Not:

We are not therapists, counselors, doctors, a taxi service, a referral line for other 12- step programs, treatment facilities, or a sober activities directory.

Although we wish to be as helpful as possible, our experience and the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous suggest that we are most successful when we remain focused on identifying and recovering from our problem with alcohol and help others to do the same.

How Do I Use This Packet?

Read this packet through. It is suggested that you have an understanding of Teleservice as a whole, so that you can see clearly how your commitment works within the system. You can best fulfill your commitment with a clear understanding of what your part is. This will enable you to accurately inform and assist others.

Focus on the section that describes your commitment. See that you understand what it says. Please, if you have any questions ask your daily coordinator or an experienced Teleservice volunteer. WE WERE ALL NEW ONCE, AND MOST OF US WERE A BIT NERVOUS AND UNSURE - ASK! WE WOULD LOVE TO HELP!

Keep this packet to reference. Questions will come to you along the way.

2. Phone Line Volunteer

What Does That Mean?

Your commitment is to answer the phone when someone in need calls, your shift is 4-12 hours long, once a month and lasts a minimum of one year. Having this commitment means that when a person calls Alcoholics Anonymous at 1-415-499-0400 during your shift, the call will be routed to your telephone.

What Do I Do?

- You receive calls for Alcoholics Anonymous during the duration of your shift.
- You give out times and locations of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings using a current printed meeting directory or www.aasf.org.
- You share general information about Alcoholics Anonymous.
- If available, you talk with the caller about your experience with alcoholism and recovery.
- If necessary, you connect alcoholics who need more time & attention with an AA volunteer from the 12-step worker list or another available member of AA.
- You keep your interactions as helpful as possible
- Keep in mind our primary purpose and share from your own experience.

How Do I Do It?

Make sure you are available during your shift and that your telephone line is free. Your coordinator will remind you beforehand.

Answer the phone in a way that is comfortable to you. Some say, "Hello, this is Jane, how may I help you?" or simply "Alcoholics Anonymous" Most of the calls you will receive will be requests for AA meeting information. Make sure that you have on hand: A CURRENT AA MEETING SCHEDULE and 12-STEP WORKER LIST.

It is your responsibility to have these resources on hand before each shift. If for some reason you do not have them, meeting schedules are available at most AA meetings and the other two resources can be obtained by calling your weekly coordinator or by attending the monthly Teleservice meeting. Teleservice meets 4th Tuesday each month at 1360 Lincoln Avenue, San Rafael (The Marin Alano Club) at 7:30 p.m. New volunteer and meeting representative orientation is at 7PM.

When sharing general information about Alcoholics Anonymous the following definition may be used: "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women 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 AA membership:

we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA 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."

Sometimes those calling for information will be parents, spouses, family, or friends of a problem drinker. We must ask, "Does he or she (the problem drinker) want to talk with someone from AA?" If the answer is "No, but he / she needs help!", we express sympathy but explain to the caller that the problem drinker must ask for help and advise the caller to make the AA number available to the drinker. If the answer is "Yes" then ask to speak to the problem drinker directly.

If more explicit information about AA is desired, generally we suggest the caller attend an AA meeting and talk to someone there.

When a caller wants more than meeting or general AA information, you are welcome to reach out to a 12-step worker or talk with them more and ask questions, such as:

- "Do you have a problem with alcohol?"
- "Do have a desire to stop drinking?"
- "Would you like to have someone call you to further talk about AA?"
- "Would you like to go to a meeting?"

It is important to be helpful, keeping in mind our steps, traditions, and your own personal experience with alcoholism and recovery as guidelines for the conversation. If the caller says yes to questions like these, we may be able to help. If a person is calling about problems other than alcohol we politely but firmly explain that we are here to talk about recovery from alcoholism. Remember our primary purpose! (If a 12-step worker is not available, use other resources, such as your sponsor or support group to find someone to help you.)

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES DO WE GIVE OUT ANY PERSONAL PHONE NUMBERS TO CALLERS!

Ask the caller for his / her first name and phone number, then call a 12-step worker with the information. You might also want to give a brief summary about the caller.

When speaking to a caller, we focus on our problems with alcohol and our recovery from alcoholism. Remember, the caller dialed Alcoholics Anonymous. Other services are available through the phone book. As we stated in our opening page, our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. We are not therapists, counselors, doctors, a referral line for other 12-step programs, treatment facilities or a sober activities directory.

Keep in mind our 6th Tradition:

"An AA Group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose."

AT ALL TIMES, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO REMEMBER TO BE COURTEOUS AND CARING. OFTEN A PERSON'S FIRST INTRODUCTION TO AA IS THROUGH YOU!

3. 12-Step Worker

What Does That Mean?

Being a 12-Step worker means that your name and telephone number are on the Marin Teleservice 12-Step Worker List of Volunteers. Marin Teleservice and Central Office workers connect alcoholics in need with sober members of AA using **gender**, availability and geographic location.

You may be called by Marin Teleservice or Central Office and be asked to call back a suffering alcoholic who wants help. Part of the 12-Step worker commitment may include: talking to, meeting with, and/or attending an AA meeting with the person in need.

What Do I Do?

- A. You receive a call from a Teleservice volunteer asking if you are available to help an alcoholic in need.
- B. If you are available you will call the suffering alcoholic with the phone number and name given to you.
- C. You identify yourself to the suffering alcoholic and see how you can best be of service to him or her.
- D. If a personal visit to the alcoholic or a ride to an AA meeting is your course of action, you call another sober member of AA to join you. NEVER GO ALONE.
- E. Keep in mind our primary purpose and share from your own experience.

How Do I Do It?

A. Write down the first name and phone number of the suffering alcoholic, double-checking to confirm that your information is correct. The Phone Line Volunteer will share information about the caller. Call the alcoholic in need. It is important to note that even if the Phone Line Volunteer tells you that the caller wants a ride to a meeting or to be visited it is still necessary that you call the suffering alcoholic yourself before taking any action.

B. If the alcoholic answers, identify yourself as calling from Alcoholics Anonymous. If it is not the original caller who answers the phone it is important to RESPECT ANONYMITY and not identify yourself as calling from AA. Simply give your name and if the caller does not come to the phone, do not leave a message. *Let tact and common sense be your guide.*

Here are some questions we find most helpful:

- "Do you find it hard to control your drinking?"
- "Have you been drinking today?"
- "Are you drinking now?"
- "Do you have alcohol in the house?"
- "Do you have a desire to stop drinking?"
- "Would you like to go to an AA meeting?"

Perhaps the caller just wants to talk. Many times, simply listening and sharing your experience in return is what is needed to fulfill your commitment.

C. If a personal visit or a ride to an AA meeting is your course of action, you will need to contact another sober member of AA using either the 12-Step Worker List or your personal phone numbers. DO NOT GO ON 12-STEP CALLS ALONE! You will need to get accurate information from the caller as to their location. If a person is very drunk, it may not be advisable that you visit them in this state, for reasons of safety.

Although it may not always be clear-cut, in general our function as the 12-Step worker is to share our experience, strength and hope by visiting with, talking to, or taking the alcoholic to a meeting.

D. At times you may be asked to drive the caller to a hospital or detox facility. **This is a personal judgment call and not a requirement of this commitment.** You may want to discuss this with other experienced 12-Step workers

4. Teleservice Rep

What Does That Mean?

Having a commitment as a Teleservice Representative means that you have agreed to serve as liaison between a regular Alcoholics Anonymous Group and Marin Teleservice. Your commitment is to attend these monthly meetings and to keep your group informed about Marin Teleservice. The length of your commitment and the suggested length of sobriety required are determined by individual AA groups.

What Do I Do?

When you are a “Teleservice Rep”:

- You represent your AA group as a voting member of Marin Teleservice.
- You attend monthly Marin Teleservice meetings
- You stay informed and inform your group about Teleservice.
- You make regular Teleservice announcements at your AA group about available Teleservice shifts, upcoming Teleservice events (such as workshops), and other related information.
- You communicate the need for group support of Marin Teleservice.
- You have a clear understanding of what Teleservice commitments entail.

How Do I Do It?

Attend the monthly meetings of Marin Teleservice. There will be a “new Rep” orientation at 7:00 pm, just prior to the regular monthly business meeting. As a representative of your group, you can vote on any matter presented during the Teleservice meeting.

By reading this packet, attending the monthly meeting and asking questions as they come up for you, you will become informed about Teleservice.

When making your announcement to your group we ask that you direct people to www.marintelesevice.com to sign up for shifts.

One of the services you provide for your group is that of being a resource for the members of your group who are interested in volunteering for a Teleservice Shift commitment. By reading the description of what each commitment entails, you can accurately inform your members about what different types of commitments are available.

5. Handling Relay Calls

The California Relay Service (CRS) makes it possible for hearing impaired alcoholics to use the Alcoholics Anonymous telephone line. To follow are directions for receiving and placing relay calls.

Receiving a Relay Call

When you pick up the phone line and the caller says something like, "This is a **California Relay Service** call," **DO NOT HANG UP!** The caller is an operator assisting a deaf or hearing-impaired person. The operator is sitting at a keyboard and computer screen, reciting what the deaf or hearing-impaired caller is typing on a keyboard. When you respond the operator types exactly what you say so the hearing-impaired caller can read what you say. The operator may ask if you've done a CRS call before and provide help and instructions. The operator will tell you what the hearing-impaired person is typing. When the operator says "**Go ahead**," that is your signal to respond. Speak clearly at a slow, even pace and use the first person as you normally would, e.g., "I can help" rather than "They can help." The operator will type whatever you say, so the original caller can read it on a display screen. When you're done, say "**Go ahead**." You should say "**Go ahead**" every time you're finished speaking and waiting for reply. The operator will tell you if the hearing-impaired caller is ending the call, or you can tell the operator if you feel it's time to end the call.

EXAMPLE CALL

Operator: Hello, this is a California Relay Service Call, operator #1234. Have you ever taken a CRS call before?

You: *Yes I have.*

Operator: Ok. The caller says (reading from display screen) "I need to find a meeting today." GO AHEAD

You: *Sure, I can help with that. What city are you in?" GO AHEAD*

Operator: (reading from display screen) "I'm in Larkspur." GO AHEAD

You: *Are you looking for a meeting right away or later on? GO AHEAD*

Operator: (reading from display screen) "About 6:30 or 7 this evening would be best." GO AHEAD

You: *No problem...provide list of meetings...Will one of those work for you? GO AHEAD*

Operator: (reading from display screen) "Perfect. That's all I need, thank you." Caller is ready to end the call.

You: *Ok, thank you for calling. Goodbye.*

Placing a Relay Call

Dial **711**. An operator will answer and will assist you in communicating with the hearing-impaired or deaf person you're calling, providing help and instructions along the way.

Provide the **name and phone number** of the hearing-impaired person you're calling and wait for the operator to make contact.

6. "What Should I Do If...?"

What if I can't make my shift?

Call the Coordinator for your day as much in advance as possible.

As a general rule, two missed shifts will result in your shift being filled by another volunteer permanently.

What if I receive a call from someone who is drunk?

This is common. We need to remember where we came from and that this may be the caller's first introduction to Alcoholics Anonymous. We respond with tolerance and understanding and try to get an idea as to whether or not they have a desire to stop drinking. You may refer to a 12-Step Worker.

Remember our 3rd Tradition: *"The only requirement for AA membership is the desire to stop drinking."*

What if the caller identifies as an alcoholic, but wants to talk about topics other than alcohol?

If you have tried to bring the discussion back to recovery from alcoholism but have been unsuccessful, politely but firmly state that this line needs to be kept available to the caller who has a desire to stop drinking. At times we have found it necessary to tell the caller we have to hang up now, and then do so. (See page 1 for more information)

Am I required to have worked The 12 Steps in order to have a Teleservice commitment?

If you have sober experience on how to not drink one day at a time, you have something to share with a still suffering alcoholic. However you are required to have 6 months or more sobriety. While many of us find it helpful to have experience with the steps, it is not a requirement for a Teleservice commitment.

What if a caller calls all the time and doesn't get sober?

We are familiar with these callers, and while it may be frustrating, we continue to treat them with understanding and tolerance. It is not for us to judge when it is time for another to get sober. Continuing to stay sober ourselves is the most attractive statement we can make about sobriety.

What if the caller is yelling, cursing, or making derogatory remarks to me?

While it is true that we strive to be tolerant and understanding, this does not include being a willing target for abuse. This sort of interaction is not helpful to the caller and it may be damaging to you. We support you in hanging up on calls like this. Remember that the caller does not have your home phone number. It may be appropriate for you to call your shift coordinator or your sponsor for further suggestions.