



Hello everyone, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The court system has required you to attend AA meetings as part of your probation, and I am here to tell you a little about what AA is and what it is not...and to answer any questions you may have.

**\*\*\*Add the following if approved by court---**

At the end of this orientation I will sign your paper, so you get credit for attending this meeting.

I will give you all a few pieces of literature as well as a meeting schedule, so you know where local AA meetings are located.

AA is not a part of the court system and does not affiliate with any other organization. We are not here to determine if anyone here is or is not an alcoholic. That will be up to you to decide.

AA was established in 1935 and became the original 12 step self-help program.

Following is the "Preamble to Alcoholics Anonymous". This is read as part of the opening to just about every AA meeting you attend. You could call this AA's "mission statement".

### **The Preamble of Alcoholics Anonymous**

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 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.

There are 2 main types of meetings in AA: 1) an “Open Meeting” and 2) a “Closed Meeting”. If you look at a meeting schedule each meeting will be listed with an abbreviation indicating the format. Most meetings usually last one hour.

- An **Open Meeting** is just like it sounds. Anyone who is interested can attend, whether you want to get sober or not. This is the type of meeting that non-alcoholics can attend. Someone may just want to “check out” a meeting. Most of these meetings are “discussion” type meetings and may be classified as **Open Discussion** meetings. Meeting formats like a “discussion” meeting will be discussed in a few minutes.
- A Closed Meeting is for the individual who wants to get and stay sober. As stated in the preamble “the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking”. We ask that you only attend a closed meeting if you have a problem with alcohol. Most of these meetings are also “discussion” meetings and that same format applies.
- **Open and Closed** meetings are conducted by AA members who determine the format of the meeting. If you do not want to talk, no one is going to make you. You may simply say “I pass” if someone does happen to call on you and invite you to share.

There are some general **formats** for AA meetings whether open or closed. A **Discussion Meeting**, **Speaker Meeting** and **Big Book Study**

- A **Discussion** meeting may be “open” or “closed” and includes individuals discussing issues related to sobriety. We confine our talks to our problems and solutions related to alcohol and alcoholism. We do not interrupt people or speak directly to others. We make “I” statements and try to avoid statements like “you should”. We try not to take more than 3-4 minutes at a time.
- A Speaker meeting is usually “open” and includes a main speaker that will tell his or her story. After the initial readings the speaker is introduced and then the speaker uses the rest of the hour to talk about their experiences with drinking; what they were like, what happened and what they are like now.
- A Big Book Study may be open or closed and is a meeting in which participants study the “Alcoholics Anonymous” text book, commonly known as the “Big Book”. If you have a book, feel free to bring it. There are usually copies of the book to use at the meeting but if you want your own copy just speak with the chairperson after the meeting.

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Regardless of the type and format of the meeting, newcomers are encouraged to listen for similarities instead of focusing on the differences. If you can relate to what is being said, we encourage you to attend meetings even after your court requirements have been met. You may only be required to attend one meeting a week, but many attend several a week, even daily.

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There are some other important topics to discuss about meetings and AA.

- We are self-supporting through our own contributions. At every meeting, a basket will be passed, most members give a dollar or two- but you do not have to feel obligated to contribute. The money that is gathered is used to pay the bills for the meeting space, for expenses like **coffee**, and to support AA as a whole. Most groups ask that if you have a paper to be signed that you put it in the basket. Others may expect you to turn it in directly to the chairperson. It will be signed, and you can pick it up after the meeting. Court mandated papers will only be signed if you attend the entire one-hour meeting.
- People of all ages, races and social backgrounds attend AA meetings. Many young people {under 30} regularly attend AA meetings. You will see folks who look just like you in any meeting.
- We are not associated with any religion or any other organization. Discussion includes spirituality, not religion.
- Many attendees will introduce themselves by their first name. No one will ask you for your last name. This is the point of being “Anonymous”. We consider this a spiritual principle. We do not tell people outside the meetings who we saw or what was said.
- No one will try to declare you an alcoholic or ask what you believe. We are just glad to see you here. People may approach you before or after the meeting if they see a new face. This is simply a friendly custom.
- The AA program is based on a program of complete abstinence- we will not be teaching you how to drink successfully. We simply stay away from a drink one day at a time, and we have a suggested 12 step program that shows us how to do that; to recover from alcoholism. We do not keep any records of attendance nor do we follow up with you. We are not counselors or medical/legal professionals. We are simply people who have found a solution to our problem and we want to share that solution with anyone who wants it!

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- We will be giving you a meeting schedule here tonight. Again, most meetings are “open” and we suggest you start with open meetings. Please note the codes on the schedule that indicate if a meeting is open, closed, discussion, speaker, etc. You can also just google “AA meetings Athens, Ga”. You can also go to [www.athensaa.org](http://www.athensaa.org) .

**\*\*\*Share a bit about yourself**

**\*\*\*Q & A segment**