



Area 16, District 16B Athens, GA & Surrounding Area



Hotline Service (706) 389-4164 Volunteer Handbook

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www.athensaa.org

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	3
Welcome to District 16B's 24X7 Hotline Service	4
Overview	5
Handling Specific Types of Calls	6
Observing the Traditions with calls	9
Quick Reference Guide	10
Summary	10
Resources	11

Welcome to District 16B's 24X7 Hotline Service

We are glad to have you join our team and sincerely thank you for your time and service for this critical need.

Suggested Things to Do Before You take Calls

- Read this guide. The procedures, “dos” and “don’ts”, information on handling specific calls and reference materials should be familiar to you.
- If you need help with a call or are uncomfortable dealing with a situation, please text the volunteers on the current [Hotline Volunteer list](#).
- Familiarize yourself with our online meeting directory as well as the locations and types of meetings being held.

<https://www.athensaa.org/meetings.html>

- Read the Chapter “**Working with Others**” from the Big Book. It is a powerful resource that helps remind us of our limits and responsibilities. We cannot want for others more than they want for themselves.

**Settle in and have fun sharing your experience,
strength and hope!**

Overview

What is the Hotline Service?

The Hotline is a 24 x 7 phone/text service which is staffed by volunteers in recovery.

The PRIMARY purpose is to connect those who are still sick and suffering with local sober members of alcoholics anonymous and direct them to meetings so they too can share in the miracle that is recovery.

Why do We Have a Hotline Service?

Answering calls from still-suffering alcoholics is the primary objective of our District Hotline. A volunteer's voice is often the first, and sometimes the only contact a still-suffering alcoholic will have with A.A.. This Hotline Service is truly the 12th Step and the 5th Tradition in action. Remember, a calm voice and a gentle, non-judgmental manner can instill trust in a newcomer.

A cheerful voice on the telephone offers understanding and compassion to the alcoholic who has sunken to despair and hopelessness. Volunteers, who are sober members of A.A. and have working knowledge of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, and who have experience in 12-Stepping, have saved many a life just by proving that in Alcoholics Anonymous, we really care. Hotline volunteers provide this vital service – carrying the message of recovery to the “alcoholic who still suffers.” The voice on the telephone is A.A. to the caller, and its calm, caring attention assures any alcoholic calling for help that he/she will get the help they may so desperately need.

We get many types of calls to our Hotline Service, and many of them require special handling.

The most important caller is the still suffering alcoholic and, for them, a 12th Step visit or return call is your most important action.

Remember we are trying to connect the caller with our local fellowships. Do what you can to connect with the caller and encourage them to get to a meeting as quickly as possible.

How Does the Hotline Service Work?

We use Google Voice for our Hotline phone number (706) 389-4164.

There are six volunteers on the [Hotline Team and one serves as Team Lead](#). We try to keep a balance of women and men and **ask that you have at least one year of sobriety**. In addition, you must have a cell phone that is capable of receiving text and running the Google Voice App..

When you volunteer, the Team Lead will help you setup your mobile devices and give a brief orientation. Each of the Hotline Team members are available to assist in answering questions or help in handling difficult calls.

When callers call our Hotline, their call (or text) is automatically forwarded to the cell phones of all six volunteers simultaneously. The first volunteer to pick up or press “1” on his/her cellphone takes the call. If the call has already been answered by another volunteer, pressing “1” will simply disconnect anyone not already connected to the caller. Everyone receives text messages and can see if another volunteer has replied.

Missed calls can be checked via the Google Voice App (available for iPhone & Android). By opening Google Voice a log of incoming, outgoing, missed calls, texts and voicemails can be viewed.

Handling Specific Types of Calls

Our Overall Procedure

Our primary goal should be to encourage and direct callers to a local A.A. meeting so they can begin the journey. Do your best to help reduce their fear and where possible arrange to meet them or have another volunteer meet them at a local A.A. group so they have a warm introduction.

WE REFRAIN FROM GIVING ANY ADVICE ON ANY SUBJECT; THAT IS NOT OUR ROLE.

If a ride is needed, get their contact information and let them know you will attempt to arrange a ride by reaching out to our local fellowship.

If you cannot locate someone to help within ½ hour, call the caller back yourself from the Google Voice App to assure them that you will have someone soon. Don't lose contact.

NEVER, EVER GIVE OUT THE NAME, TELEPHONE NUMBER, OR ADDRESS OF ANY MEMBER OF A.A. FOR ANY REASON. NO EXCEPTIONS!

Callers Who are Under the Influence

Bill W. offers the following guidance on this matter located on page 90 of our Big Book.

"If he does not want to stop drinking, don't waste time trying to persuade him. You may spoil a later opportunity. This advice is given for his family also. They should be patient, realizing they are dealing with a sick person."

"Don't deal with him when he is very drunk, unless he is ugly and the family needs your help. Wait for the end of the spree, or at least for a lucid interval."

Reading the chapter, "Working with Others" will prepare you for what we are responsible for in this area.

Helping the Problem Drinker

That first call is a difficult one for a problem drinker, as many of us can recall! It may take time for the person to verbalize their purpose in making the call. The person may talk about a friend or relative who has a problem. Maybe they "just aren't sure" if they have a problem with drinking. While you cannot diagnose the caller's problem, *you can listen and share what the Big Book tells us in how to determine whether or not we are an alcoholic.* In any event, you will be able to determine what help is needed in a very short time. Please maintain a calm, reassuring voice.

It is best not to jump to any conclusions. If the person can admit that they have a problem, or may have a problem with drinking, perhaps they have begun to take the first step. A little coaxing may be necessary, but in any case, patience and tact are essential.

If possible, try to determine if the caller has had any previous contact with A.A.. If not, state that we are a fellowship of alcoholic men and women who help one another.

Explain that we are not a school, clinic, or a treatment center, and we do not practice therapy of any kind. We cannot give legal, medical or other professional advice and do not provide money, lodging or transportation **to any place except a meeting (or a treatment center/detox if the caller requests).**

Calls for Meeting Information

Many, if not most, of your calls may be of this type!

Many of these calls will be from traveling A.A. members who need to find a meeting. However, you may get a call from a fairly new person, or even a newcomer asking for this information.

Be sensitive to the type of meeting...OPEN or CLOSED.

Callers who ask where “classes are held” or make similar inquiries are usually, but not always, ordered to attend A.A. meetings by courts, family or bosses. Many may want signatures on an attendance record.

Closed meetings are limited to those who *have a desire to stop drinking*, and some of those do not sign attendance records. It is always the meeting chair person’s decision whether or not to sign such a record.

See the Resources section for the tools to help callers find meetings.

Calls for Help for a Problem Drinker from a Friend or Family Member

Explain that Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of recovering alcoholic men and women who help one another.

We do not give medical, legal or other professional advice. We are not a school, clinic or treatment center and do not practice therapy of any kind. We do not provide money or lodging. Fundamentally, you may choose to tell the caller what A.A. is, but do not try to reach the alcoholic through another person.

In fact, even attempting to carry the message “secondhand” through the caller to the drinker is playing into the sickness that this friend or family member (the caller) has. Tell the caller about the Family Group of Al-Anon, and give them the website address of Georgia Al-Anon, if you wish (see the resource section below).

Try to get the alcoholic to call you directly.

One other note about such calls is that with some such calls the problem drinker may actually be the one calling but be too ashamed or embarrassed to admit it. Usually with a bit of tact, and careful listening, you can detect this from the caller.

Finally, as with all calls, remember your role. Be caring and polite, we are trying to encourage them to get connected with us at a local meeting.

Calls About Treatment Centers

Calls of this nature often come from friends or family members, or from problem drinkers themselves. In keeping with our traditions, we have no opinion on treatment centers; we neither endorse nor oppose them. We also cannot be affiliated with any of them. We simply acknowledge in general terms that they exist and have helped some recovering alcoholics.

Calls About Other Addictions

For calls with problems other than alcoholism, please refer caller to telephone directory, internet search or suggest they call 911 for assistance.

We have listed a few local resources for common issues, but generally this is none of our business as we are dealing with those seeking recovery from alcoholism. Do your best to be helpful but stay within the primary purpose of our program.

Calls after 8PM

In our area, the latest meetings we have begin at 8:30 PM.

This means callers who call in after this time will not likely be able to get to a meeting on the same day. Do your best to encourage them and help them locate a meeting the next day. Remind them our service is 24 X 7 and if they feel the need to drink, they should instead call us, we are here to help.

Prank Calls

It happens. People think it's funny. It's not. If you have these calls, note the time and we can attempt to block them from the hotline. Report these to the Hotline Team Leader for action.

Those Needing Rides

If they need a ride and you are willing, great. If not, use the Hotline Team and your own local fellowship resources to see if you can solve the problem.

Reach out to the Hotline Team Leader to see if they can assist or provide guidance.

Ideally, we agree to meet newcomers AT LOCAL MEETINGS where they and we can be assured of right conduct and intention.

Observing the Traditions with calls

It is important to remember the 5th, 10th and 12th traditions when handling all calls.

Tradition 5

Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic...there are other groups, organizations or people to help with other problems.

Tradition 10

We have no opinion on outside issues...or treatment centers, hospitals, groups or organizations...we neither endorse nor oppose them.

Tradition 12

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions...

We take a number where the caller can be reached and tell them we will have someone call them back as soon as we can. This procedure applies to 12th Step call as well as requests for speakers, information or for any other reason.

THERE IS NO EXCEPTION TO THIS RULE.

We never, ever...NEVER, *EVER*...give out the name, address or telephone number of another member of A.A. over the A.A. Hotline.

Quick Reference Guide

Answering Calls (suggested)

“Hello, this is the A.A. Hotline, who am I speaking with?” (*They may not want to say*)

“Is this a medical emergency?” (*If so, direct them to call 911*)

“How may I assist you today?”

Please Do

- Be aware and ready for your day.
- Prepare yourself ahead of time
- Be familiar with online meeting schedule
- Install the Meeting Guide App on your smartphone
- Remain calm, courteous and businesslike at all times.
- Remember your role... connect those who are still sick and suffering with local sober members of Alcoholics Anonymous and direct them to meetings
- Be mindful of the traditions...especially 5, 10 & 12.

Please Don't

GIVE OUT THE NAME, PHONE NUMBER OR ADDRESS OF ANOTHER A.A. MEMBER NO EXCEPTIONS.

- Admit knowledge of whether or not someone else is a member of A.A.- simply say “I can't answer that.”
- Approve of, disapprove of, or add support to any other organization, group, treatment center or program.

Summary

“I am responsible, when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there, and for that I am responsible.”

It means, that if you are able, you will help connect the caller with resources to get them to meetings. You are **NOT** expected nor encouraged to rescue every drunk from their predicament.

Simply stated, be the voice of encouragement.

DO NOT PUT YOURSELF OR ANYONE ELSE IN DANGER. USE CAUTION WHEN AGREEING TO MEET AND WHERE POSSIBLE TAKE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER.

Resources

Utilize the following information to help connect callers with local resources. If the caller has internet access, direct them to our website after helping them find a meeting.

<https://www.athensaa.org>

Online Meeting Finder:

Statewide

<https://find.aageorgia.org/meetings/>

Due to its nature the list may be out of date. When using this to refer others to meetings give them several options.

Nationwide

Meeting Guide App

FREE with any iPhone or Android device.

iOS: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/meeting-guide/id1042822181>

Google Play: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.meetingguide>

Other Resources

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS - <https://www.ga-al-anon.org/>

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS - <https://grscna.com/> - 888-947-7262

GEORGIA CRISIS & ACCESS LINE (24-hour crisis hotline): 800-715-4225

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE: 800-273-8255