

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION & PROFESSIONAL AWARENESS**

The goal of AA Public Information Professional Awareness (PI&PA) is to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. This is achieved in two ways, through informing the general public about the AA programme and through reaching "the third person", whose work is or may be involved with the active alcoholic. The "Public Information Workbook: incorporating activities of co-operation with the professional community" ("PI Workbook") is very useful, and is available from your Local/Central Service Office or direct from General Service Office.

In 2003, the Australian General Service Conference decided to support the appointment of a National PI Coordinator, reporting to the Trustees' PI&PA Committee. General duties will be to coordinate the National PI Forum and to collect and disseminate PI&PA information at national level.

### **AA'S MOVEMENT- WIDE PUBLIC INFORMATION POLICY**

In all public relationships, AA's sole objective is to help the still-suffering alcoholic. Always mindful of the importance of personal anonymity, we believe this can be done by making known to them, and to those who may be interested in their problem, our own experience as individuals and as a Fellowship, in learning to live without alcohol. We believe that our experience should be made available freely to all who express an interest. We believe further that all efforts in this field should always reflect our gratitude for the gift of sobriety and our awareness that many outside AA are equally concerned with the serious problem of alcoholism.

### **LOCAL PI&PA COMMITTEES**

There are many local committees, and contacts who carry the message via local newspapers and media. PI&PA Committees also contribute sharing to "*AA Around Australia*". Between the General Service Board (GSB) and local committees there is a good exchange of experience. The General Service Office is in regular correspondence with local PI&PA Committees whose ideas, activities and suggestions are relayed in these Guidelines and in "*AA Around Australia*". In turn, the Board committee provides TV and radio announcements on AA, news releases, special pamphlets, leaflets, flyers and service material for use at the local level. Host Committees of National Conventions and Regional Forums also provide local media with opportunities to take an interest in AA activities, and expertise from local committee work is invaluable in planning for these.

### **FINANCING**

Usually, the cost of doing PI&PA service work is met from the general contributions to whatever body forms the committee – Group, other unit of the General Service structure (District, Area) or Central Service Office. When a new committee is in a locality with a sparse AA population, members of neighbouring Groups may be called upon for special contributions. Even in Areas where AA is firmly established through a large population, Groups may be asked to contribute to certain special projects; for example, an effort to supply all local libraries with copies of the 'Big Book'.

## GETTING STARTED

Once a committee is formed, it is a good idea to decide in advance just who is going to do what, in order to avoid friction and duplication of effort. An example of good co-operation was offered by an Area Assembly: "We should keep in mind that our purpose should be to assist and suggest to the District PI&PA Committees and not to replace them." The Area Committee concentrated on these aims by seeing that there was a steady exchange of experience among the smaller units; maintaining a list of available AA speakers for the whole Area; handling PI contacts with Area newspapers and radio and TV stations.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The first qualification for doing PI&PA, or any other service work is, of course, a period of continuous sobriety, the period being defined by those responsible for setting up the committee. Often, committee members include those whose job experience is in the communications media, public relations or one of the professions, but such a background is not, however, essential. All committee members do need to be thoroughly familiar with the AA programme and to be able to provide accurate information about the Fellowship. Additionally, an understanding of all of the Traditions and, in particular, a firm grasp of the anonymity Tradition, are vital. The pamphlet "*Understanding Anonymity*" and the *Anonymity Wallet Card* are useful in making the AA anonymity principle clear to the public. Remember, it is not a break of Tradition Eleven when, in private conversation, you identify yourself as an AA member with non-AAs encountered in the course of PI work.

## BASIC FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

In embarking on PI&PA projects committees sometimes divide the responsibilities in advance. A large committee may name sub-committees to cover specific fields such as newspapers, talks to non-AA groups, etc. In smaller committees, a single member may volunteer to work with a given field.

Of course, meetings provide continuous sharing; if there is rotation in these individual or sub-committee assignments, new people can draw upon predecessors' experience. Often neighbouring PI&PA committees hold joint meetings at intervals, or send individual members to attend the other committees' regular meetings. In some areas, a Central Service PI&PA committee and a PI&PA connected with a General Service unit may pool their efforts and work together. These two entities then share joint expenses. Co-ordination between PI&PA and Treatment & Accessibilities and Correctional Facilities committees is important to all in carrying the AA message effectively, and avoiding duplications.

## NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

The "PI Workbook" will be of help in giving practical suggestions for working with daily newspapers, including those in a foreign language, weekly newspapers (including suburban publications), local magazines and newsletters, local professional and trade magazines, company house bulletins, church publications and local radio and TV stations.

## TELEVISION

Effective ways to approach key people at local TV stations are also included in the “[PI Workbook](#)”, together with material useful for TV and various methods to protect the anonymity of people who appear on TV as members of Alcoholics Anonymous. TV Community Announcements are available from General Service Office.

## RADIO

This medium has several advantages:

- 1 lower costs.
- 2 it has a wider range, covering places where TV reception is unsatisfactory and/or there are no local channels;
- 3 it appeals to Groups hard to reach by other means, such as people in deprived areas;
- 4 ease in preserving anonymity when AA members are on the air. It is suggested that a representative variety of average members be used on the air. Radio Community Announcements are available from General Service Office for use by local committees. These tapes are made up of six 30-second announcements.

## PUBLIC AWARENESS MEETINGS

Also known as community meetings, PI meetings, or information meetings, prove to be an effective way of carrying the message in towns or cities. The “[PI Workbook](#)” outlines the sort of programme commonly presented, as well as a sample announcement for inviting newspaper, radio, TV representatives, professionals or the general public. The personal approach to public meetings is favoured by many committees. “For AA members” said one committee, “the ticket of admission was ‘Bring a non-alcoholic with you’”.

## SPEAKING TO OUTSIDE GROUPS

The pamphlet “*Speaking at Non-AA Meetings*”, designed specifically to help in this service work, includes an outline and other ideas for the content of such talks. Most committees emphasise the importance of a question and answer period. “*Speaking at Non-AA Meetings*” includes lists of questions frequently asked so that speakers will be ready with satisfactory answers. In PI&PA work, an exchange of talks is an interesting idea. To improve AA's relations with the growing number of local alcoholism agencies, a series of “awareness meetings” could be arranged in which each organisation could be asked to provide a speaker to give a 10 minute explanatory talk on what that agency does. AA, in turn, could provide a speaker to give the AA message. Ample time could be allowed for discussion.

## LITERATURE

Displays of AA literature may be set up at public meetings, talks to outside groups, conventions of outside groups and health fairs. Flyers such as *"AA at a Glance"* and *"A Message to Teenagers"* are available to committees in quantity, at one or two cents each, specifically for distribution during speaking engagements. Public libraries offer wide opportunity and may welcome AA books and booklets, along with these and other pamphlets. Additionally, PI&PA committees have provided AA literature for the libraries of schools, colleges, businesses and more. Similar outlets are bookmobiles, hospital reading carts and literature racks at churches.

## CARDS AND SIGNS

These are often used to offer the telephone number of the nearest Local/Central Service Office, Groups or AA contact, depending upon the size of the community, or to give the times and places of nearby meetings. Cards may be used in police stations, doctors' surgeries, etc, whilst the road sign is very eye catching to the AA traveller looking for a contact; it also serves the dual purpose of declaring to all that AA is available to anyone who wants it.

## TELEPHONE DIRECTORIES

Sometimes the local PI&PA Committee is responsible for the AA listing in the phone book (including the Yellow Pages).

## LETTERS

In addition to using the mails for sending releases to newspapers and for announcing public meetings, a PI&PA Committee may direct mailings to a specific group (such as students) to call their attention to AA as a resource. This step is especially common when a committee has just been set up and few contacts have been made. AA literature is often enclosed with the letters. These letters may point out the availability of AA speakers and explain how such talks may be arranged. Careful planning is needed in writing letters to ensure that AA will be presented accurately and will exercise the "attraction" mentioned in Tradition Eleven. Thank you letters are usually sent to media when they have featured AA material, as well as to anyone who has welcomed AA speakers.

## LUNCHEONS

The gratitude luncheon is another way of thanking non-AAs who have given a PI&PA committee an opportunity to carry the message. Committees have also invited public representatives to a special luncheon as a means of introducing them to Alcoholics Anonymous. Brief talks may be given, but the atmosphere is kept informal. For both these and the gratitude luncheons, it has been suggested that the seating arrangement should alternate hosts and guests, to give the latter a chance to meet some live examples of recovery in AA. See Guideline GL-25 *"Public Information: Convening Luncheons / Dinners"*.

## INFORMING THE FELLOWSHIP

Though the 'public' in 'public information' refers to non-AAs, many local PI&PA Committees consider that keeping the Fellowship itself informed is also among their responsibilities. Building wider understanding of the *Twelve Traditions* among AA Groups is a common activity and special meetings are often held for this purpose. Committees everywhere have been successful in explaining the PI&PA applications of *Tradition Eleven*. Some AAs once tended to oppose any PI&PA work as promotion, but such confusion is now rare. Many PI&PA committees provide local members with full, precise reports on all their activity in the area. This is an excellent way to enlist the co-operation of local Groups in planned projects.

In 2007, Conference approved the establishment of a Service Website, to facilitate sharing inside the Fellowship of resources, notices, experience, strength and hope for all *trusted servants* working in any area of AA Service. The more members share, the richer will this new resource be.

Information can be disseminated through:

- The AA Service Website <http://aaservice.org.au/members/>  
Send articles, news, reports, notices or other forms of sharing about any kind of Service work to [editor@aaservice.org.au](mailto:editor@aaservice.org.au) (other features of this site include an Ask-it Basket, discussion forums, AA links, AA events and resources for download, to all of which members are invited to contribute).
- Contact the PI Coordinator (or the Treatment & Accessibilities Coordinator if relevant or both) if you need information or assistance with communicating wider that your local area. Contact [nationalpi@aaservice.org.au](mailto:nationalpi@aaservice.org.au) (or [nationaltcf@aaservice.org.au](mailto:nationaltcf@aaservice.org.au)).
- A PI&PA section in a local AA bulletin.
- Publishing in the local newspaper (or mailing to Groups), a chart showing all completed projects in a given year. For instance, listing the types of outside groups that requested speakers, with the approximate size of audiences for each.
- Visiting local Groups to give brief talks about PI&PA. Each member may agree to cover certain Groups.
- Setting up PI&PA workshops at assemblies, conventions and other AA get-togethers.
- Inviting members of local AA Groups to attend a special meeting on PI&PA. Rather than sending the invitations by mail or asking Group secretaries to make the announcements, the committee may assign its own members to visit the Groups.
- Informing local Groups when a TV or radio programme produced with the co-operation of the PI&PA committee is about to be aired.
- Email networks
- The Internet: the National website ([www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au)) has an events noticeboard, and some Local/Central Service Office have similar facilities.
- The quarterly newsletter, "*AA Around Australia*".