

ITEM E: Review updated Bridging the Gap service materials.

Background notes:

Service material is under the purview of staff responsibility and does not require conference approval but is included here for committee consideration.

From the October 29, 2023, Meeting of the trustees' CPC/ Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee accepted the progress report on Bridging the Gap service materials. The committee appreciated the work done to date on the A.A. Guidelines on Bridging the Gap and agreed to forward to the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities for their consideration.

From the July 30, 2023, Meeting of the trustees' CPC/ Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee discussed a draft of the revised A.A. Guidelines on Bridging the Gap and made some suggestions for changes. The committee looks forward to a revised draft or progress report at the October 2023 meeting.

2023 Committee Consideration of the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities:

The committee discussed the progress report on a proposed Bridging the Gap workbook. The committee noted that information on Bridging the Gap and other contact programs already exists in the Treatment and Corrections Workbooks and suggested instead that sharing be collected from the Fellowship and combined with existing resources to develop A.A. Guidelines on Bridging the Gap.

Secretary's note:

The revisions to F-183 Bridging the Gap Request Form and F-184 Bridging the Gap Volunteer Form mirror similar updates that were done to corrections forms. In addition, F-183 was expanded to include more information about the program Alcoholics Anonymous.

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Background:

1. F-183 [Bridging the Gap Request Form](#)*
2. F-184 [Bridging the Gap Volunteer Form](#)*
3. Revisions to F-183 Bridging the Gap Request Form
4. Revisions to F-184 Bridging the Gap Volunteer Form.
5. A.A. Guidelines on Bridging the Gap

**Links to older versions*

**FOR PEOPLE
IN TREATMENT**

Bridging the Gap/Request Form

Date: _____

Name: _____

Facility Name: _____

Location: _____

Your age range (circle one):

Under 21 22-35 36-60 over 60

Gender identity: _____
(e.g. Male, Female, Non-binary)

Preferred Language: _____

How can we contact you?

Call/Text: _____

Email: _____

Call Treatment Facility: _____

Discharge Information: _____

Date of Discharge: _____

Town or City: _____

Zip or Postal Code: _____

Province or State: _____

Please send this form to:

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F-183

4.5M – 10/23 (GP)

A.A. Bridging The Gap Request

Connecting Those
in Treatment to the
A.A. Community

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What is Bridging the Gap?

Bridging the Gap is a voluntary temporary contact program designed to help the alcoholic in a treatment program or other kind of formal setting to make the transition to a life of sobriety in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Many people find it difficult to make the transition from treatment to a life of sobriety.

In order to bridge this gap, A.A. members have volunteered to be temporary contacts and to introduce newcomers to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Who can request contact through Bridging the Gap?

People from all kinds of programs, including Detox Centers, Hospitals, Treatment Centers, Aftercare programs and IOPs can ask for an A.A. volunteer to connect with. For those leaving a Correctional facility, there is a separate program called Contact Upon Release. Visit <https://www.aa.org/corrections-correspondence-service-insider-request-form>

Is Bridging the Gap for me?

If you are in a treatment program and want to stop drinking (or stay stopped), Alcoholics Anonymous wants to help. Bridging the Gap is especially helpful for those who have not been to A.A. or who don't have strong A.A. connections in the town or city where they will be living after treatment.

Many of us have been where you are now and know that the program of A.A. and its fellowship can do for you what it had done for us and countless others.

Am I an alcoholic?

Only you can decide for yourself if you belong in A.A. Our third tradition says that "The only requirement is a desire to stop drinking."

What do I have to do?

This flier includes a simple sign-up form. You can fill it out and send it to the address or email listed on the back. Be sure to include your contact information. Someone from A.A. will be in touch soon.

What will happen if I sign up?

A Bridging the Gap contact from A.A. will reach out to you. Your Bridging the Gap contact is temporary only. They are there to support you, answer questions and explain the A.A. program of recovery. They will not provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money or such other services. You may hear basic suggestions for sobriety that the Fellowship shares, including don't drink; go to meetings; read the Big Book; call your sponsor and work the Steps.

Past experience has shown that attending an A.A. meeting as soon as possible after discharge is vital to making a sober transition to life on the outside. So your BTG contact will help make sure you get to a meeting right away.

Is there any obligation?

There is no obligation to participate in any way. A.A. members focus on helping people who ask for help. We also respect the right of anyone to go their own way.

What if I will be living in a different community after treatment?

If you are moving to or returning to a different community, be sure to put that on your sign-up form and the A.A. volunteers will do their best to connect you with someone in the community you'll be headed to.

Is there anything I should know about A.A. and A.A. meetings?

Meetings are typically listed as "open" or "closed" meetings.

- **Open meetings** are available to anyone interested in Alcoholics Anonymous' program of recovery from alcoholism. Nonalcoholics may attend open meetings as observers.
- **Closed meetings** are for A.A. members only or for those who have a drinking problem and "have a desire to stop drinking."

At both types of meetings, it may be requested that participants confine their discussion to matters pertaining to recovery from alcoholism.

There are different meeting formats: Some discuss literature like the Big Book, others feature a topic discussion or have a speaker who will talk about how they got sober and what life is like today.

There are also meetings in different languages and meetings for women only, men only, young people, beginners or other groups.

What about my anonymity?

A.A. members who attend meetings all over the U.S. and Canada agree that anonymity is important. So you can feel comfortable attending meetings without worrying that someone will see you or talk about your attendance. Many A.A. members decide to share about their participation in A.A. with family and friends, but it will be up to you to decide if and how you share this information. A.A. members are also careful not to put their faces or last names on anything that would publicly associate them with A.A.

Other Ways to Find A.A.

Some who get out of treatment prefer to find A.A. on their own. In most areas, a list of local meetings is available. To find your local office or service entity, please visit www.aa.org/find-aa.

Another great way to find local meetings is the Meeting Guide App for iOS and Android smartphones www.aa.org/meeting-guide-app

CONFIDENTIAL: 74th General Service Conference Background

12TH STEP SERVICE
OPPORTUNITY

A.A. Bridging The Gap Volunteer

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F-184

4.5M -- 10/23 (GP)

Connecting Those
in Treatment to the
A.A. Community

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A.A. Bridging the Gap Program

Dear A.A. Member,

The Bridging the Gap Program, or BTG, connects the new member being discharged from a facility to A.A. in their community. You are being asked to be that connection, what is called a Temporary Contact.

When a new, soon-to-be discharged member contacts us, we match that person to a Temporary Contact in the community where they will be living. If you have volunteered for this type of service, we will call you, get the okay and then send you their contact information.

Your job is simple. You contact the new A.A. member and arrange to take them to an A.A. meeting, preferably within 24-48 hours of their discharge. Your commitment is to take them to a variety of meetings and introduce them to other A.A. members.

During this time, you help them become acquainted, get phone numbers and perhaps locate a sponsor and a home group. You introduce them to others in A.A. so they have a broad, healthy base, then you are available to serve as a Temporary Contact for another person.

Please note: *It is not intended that you become their sponsor, even temporarily. It is best if the word "sponsor" is not used to describe this type of service. The term Temporary Contact is preferred.*

If you are willing to be the hand of A.A. when a member from a facility reaches out for help, complete the Temporary Contact form and give it to your G.S.R., or your BTG coordinator, Corrections or Treatment chairperson.

Please note: Volunteers will need to adhere to the rules facilities have regarding contact with residents, both while they are in the facility and after they are discharged. The BTG coordinator can provide the necessary information for each facility.

Suggestions for the Temporary Contact

1. Remember you may be the first outside member of A.A. the contact meets. As such, you are representing all of us. It is important to be relaxed, friendly and interested.
2. Keep the general conversation related to recovery. Remember, we have no opinion on outside issues.
3. Take time to introduce the new person to as many A.A. members as possible. Do not, however, push your contact. Some people are very shy.
4. Invite them to the "meeting after the meeting" if there is one. Show them we are happy, joyous and free and that sobriety can be enjoyable.
5. Your commitment is usually finished after a couple of weeks or after the newcomer has attended a variety of meetings and hopefully found a sponsor. Use good recovery related judgment about when to end the relationship.
6. Make sure the newly released A.A. member receives meeting schedules, phone numbers and A.A. literature.
7. Encourage the new member to attend meetings as often as possible, to find a home group and to get a sponsor as soon as possible. Let them know even a temporary sponsor now would be acceptable.
8. Share your experience, strength and hope with the newly discharged member, just as you would anyone else new to A.A. in your community.
9. Be familiar with the suggestions of the BTG program contained in the pamphlet. We don't offer or imply any other service and assistance unless we personally want to provide it.
10. Please respect the complete anonymity of the new member.

Bridging the Gap/ Volunteer Form

Date: _____

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Location: _____

Your age range (circle one):

Under 21 22-35 36-60 over 60

Gender identity: _____
(e.g. Male, Female, Non-binary)

Preferred Language: _____

City: _____

State or Province: _____

Zip or Mail Code: _____

Phone (day): _____

Phone (evening): _____

Home Group: _____

Home Group Location: _____

This information is confidential
and will remain inside A.A.

Date: _____

Please cut this part and send to your GSR,
your BTG coordinator, Corrections or
Treatment chairperson.

*Thank You for your service in
Alcoholics Anonymous*

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A.A.® Guidelines

Bridging the Gap

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

The A.A. Guidelines below are compiled from the shared service experience of A.A. members throughout the U.S. and Canada. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference. In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

HOW DO A.A. MEMBERS BRIDGE THE GAP?

All across the U.S. and Canada, A.A. members find ways to introduce new and potential A.A. members to their first meetings. Many of these new and potential members are in treatment facilities and other settings,¹ and need help finding A.A. in their home communities (this is “the gap.”) A.A. volunteers step in to “Bridge the Gap.”

Members of Alcoholics Anonymous meet new members and potential members upon their completion of a program or release from a facility, and accompany them to their first few A.A. meetings.

GETTING STARTED

Start simply when forming a committee.

Experience suggests that even though a soon-to-be released alcoholic may have been participating in an A.A. group or meeting inside a treatment or correctional setting, there is often anxiety about the transition to an A.A. group on the outside.

Remember, BTG is not intended to become a long-term A.A. relationship, but simply to help ease the newly-released member’s transition to outside A.A. and to help get them started on the road to sobriety in their home community.

BTG RESPONSIBILITIES (VARIES BY LOCATION)

In most parts of the U.S. and Canada, the work of organizing a Bridging the Gap program or Temporary Contact program is best handled by a committee of A.A. volunteers. The responsibilities of these committees often includes:

- Meeting and corresponding with staff and administration at local settings to ask for permission to share about BTG/ Temporary Contact service.
- Finding and organizing volunteers: Make announcements in local newsletters at A.A. Groups, meetings, or ask to present at local intergroup, district and area meetings and events.
- Making contact with alcoholics desiring transition help on release.

- Communicating and cooperating with other A.A. service entities, so as not to have overlapping services. Without this thoughtful approach, this can be particularly confusing to the non - AA entity or professional when being contacted by multiple committees.
- Maintaining communication with appropriate staff members at the General Service Office in New York.
- Sharing AA literature and other appropriate service materials
- Providing reliable, consistent contact information, receive requests, and routing requests to volunteers locally or across areas
- Making presentations: As a standalone committee, or make a joint presentation with PI, CPC, Corrections, Treatment, H&I committees.
- Practicing unity: Contact other local trusted servants to help find volunteers to chair committee meetings, coordinator volunteers, present to staff, participants or clients, to be temporary contact volunteers.
- Respecting autonomy: The bridging the gap activity is done differently in each location. Local trusted servants can look for help and inspiration from other areas, but ultimately create a system that works for your particular local circumstances
- The AA member volunteer contacts the alcoholic client/ participant and arranges to meet that person on the day of release to help in bridging the gap between the setting and A.A. on the outside.

LOCAL EXPERIENCE WITH BTG

Across the U.S. and Canada, local circumstances dictate how BTG volunteers connect newcomers with A.A. in their communities. In some places, there are many treatment centers, in others, potential members are encountered in detox centers, hospitals or other settings.

Out experience has shown that attending an A.A. meeting on the outside on the day of release from medical, psychiatric, thera-

¹ The type of setting can vary. Such settings include: hospitals, prisons, jails; clinical, psychiatric, behavioral health, detox, inpatient/outpatient, community based, military and veteran programs; shelters, halfway houses, transitional centers.

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peutic, or treatment setting is one of the most effective tools for making a sober transition and maintaining continued sobriety in the outside world.

Experience has also shown that temporary contacts work best when care is given to match A.A. member volunteers and newcomers by gender and, if possible, age.

Special care should be taken to ensure that any requests for temporary contacts that come from minors or other vulnerable members be handled carefully.

Experience suggests that it is particularly helpful to bring the newcomer to a variety of meetings.

BTG EXPERIENCE: WORKING WITH PROFESSIONALS

One local committee suggests that BTG volunteers need to set up a consistent way to communicate, "While it is part of my service to track down the current BTG Chairperson in an area, I doubt if a professional attempting to assist a discharged client feels the same. If a clinician/professional gets bounced around trying to help a client, they may lose interest in that case. They may also lose interest in dealing with our organization."

"It's important to remember that treatment and other therapeutic settings are managed differently through private, community, church, state or federal agencies, and may have specific requirements that A.A. volunteers should respect."

Another BTG trusted servant shared, "I found the professionals are very adaptable to do what is needed to assist their residents. We typically begin by emailing, then speak on the phone, then a zoom call to ensure all elements are in working order."

"We, the temporary contacts, need to be very clear with the newly released AA's what AA is and what AA is not. We should talk to the newcomer about our primary purpose, our singleness of purpose, our unity, and our anonymity."

GETTING ORGANIZED

"We coordinate volunteers by logging into the database and determining which town the person is being released to. We then find a member that is willing and able to reach out to them on the very day they are released."

"Our committee has a male and a female BTG chair to coordinate the contact lists of volunteers."

"We made it a priority to get the BTG lists up-to-date and involving districts so BTG will become the communication point for referrals."

"All of us on the area committee send temporary contact requests to each other when people from our respective Districts are being released to their districts so that the gaps can be adequately bridged."

"When calling a newcomer's home, remember that someone else may answer the phone who may not know about the newcomer's desire to attend an A.A. meeting. Protect his or her

anonymity by not disclosing your own association with A.A. or your purpose for calling."

CHALLENGES FACED BY BTG VOLUNTEERS

"The biggest challenge is getting the members with time involved, and at this time (because of Covid) not being able to speak in facilities face to face."

"We announce at meetings the need for volunteers and the BTG program but find this is not effective. I would love to do a workshop, but I have not been able to get any participation/direction from other entities."

"We are trying to be more inclusive....but are struggling with how to do it on our volunteer application.

"Our committee noted a gender gap. When we make a BTG presentation for volunteers we do not get a lot of female participation. We do try to appeal to women specifically in our presentation, with an emphasis on safety and anonymity. When this issue is directly discussed, women's participation is greater.

"Due to confidentiality policies and schedules, visiting a newcomer in a facility may prove to be impossible.

RELATIONSHIP TO GSO

When GSO receives a request for A.A. temporary contacts, it is forwarded to the local area.

Note: For A.A. members in custody, the pre-release temporary contact program run by Corrections Committees is a separate program. Similarly, the Corrections Correspondence Service is not a part of this temporary contact program. It is intended for alcoholics who have six months or longer remaining on their incarceration.

A.A. COMMITTEES, AND SERVICE ENTITIES

The alcoholics requesting help to transition to A.A. outside of their setting are best served when A.A. service entities and committees work together to provide the full variety of A.A. services.

Cooperation with the Professional Communities (CPC) and Public Information committees can also help to share about this service. Areas can provide pre-release contact services via dedicated transition committees at the Area/District level.

There are many instances of overlapping responsibilities. It should be clearly established that A.A. committees are not in competition with each other. Local circumstances determine who does what.

Depending on the location, the work is done by a shared committee, or the work is split into separate committees.

Local A.A. committees and members will have the best experience for each location, and can help provide bridge services and coordinate volunteers. Some local committees will host BTG/Temporary workshops and events for local professionals or A.A. members.

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An annual workshop on BTG is coordinated by and for A.A. members from all across the U.S. and Canada. To find out more, contact coordinator@btgww.org

HISTORY

Bridging the gap activities by A.A. members go back to the late 1930's. Trying to reach drunks in correctional, therapeutic, and treatment settings and escorting them to meetings was an important part of early twelfth step work, but was often not organized.

This changed in the 1970s, when the growth of in-patient treatment centers led A.A. members to realize that many alcoholics would need help finding A.A.

Most BTG programs today include regular visits to treatment settings by AA volunteers, who offer "temporary contact" to newly sober alcoholics to help them become part of AA when they leave the setting.

Today we have many forms of Bridging the Gap, Temporary Contact and Contact upon Release, and Re Entry Programs throughout our fellowship.

RESOURCES AND LITERATURE

- Meeting Guide App <https://www.aa.org/meetingguide> — helps members find meetings based on location
- Treatment Committee page on <https://www.aa.org/treatment> — request and volunteer forms are available
- A.A. Guidelines https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/aa-guidelines
- "Bridging the Gap" pamphlet
- A.A. videos and Audio. https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/videos-and-audios
- Corrections Committee page on <https://www.aa.org/corrections> — request and volunteer forms are available

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XXM – 10/23 (GP)

Rev. 10/23

MG-XX

ITEM G: Review the pamphlet “A.A. in Treatment Settings” (P-27) for effectiveness and relevance.

Background notes:

From the October 29, 2023, Meeting of the trustees’ CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee reviewed the pamphlet “A.A. in Treatment Settings” as part of their regular review of material under the purview of Treatment and Accessibilities. The committee agreed to forward to the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities the pamphlet for discussion on its’ effectiveness and relevance.

Background:

1. [A.A. in Treatment Centers](#) Pamphlet (P-27)
2. SP – [A.A. en los entornos de Tratamiento | Alcoholics Anonymous \(aa.org\)](#)
3. FR - [Les AA dans les établissements de traitement | Alcoholics Anonymous](#)

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ITEM H: Review the flyer “Where do I go from here?” (F-4)

Background notes:

From the October 29, 2023, Meeting of the trustees’ CPC/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:

The committee reviewed the flyer “Where do I go from here” as part of their regular review of material under the purview of Treatment and Accessibilities. The committee agreed to forward to the 2024 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities the flyer for discussion on its’ effectiveness and relevance.

Background:

1. Flyer [Where do I go from here](#) (F-4)
2. SP – [¿A dónde voy de aquí? | Alcoholics Anonymous \(aa.org\)](#)
3. FR - [Et maintenant, que vais-je faire ? | Alcoholics Anonymous \(aa.org\)](#)

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