**From the “AA in Treatment Settings” Pamphlet**

**What qualifications should an A.A. member have to carry the message to treatment settings?**

1. **Some good sobriety.** For exactly how long, nobody can say. Some members handle this kind of A.A. activity beautifully soon after getting sober, especially when they are accompanied by an experienced member. But others need a longer time before getting into this kind of work.
2. **Personal experience of alcoholism and recovery.** This, of course, is the chief, and unique, qualification we have. You do not need to have been hospitalized yourself to twelfth-step someone in a treatment setting. No more than you need a prison record to carry the message into a correctional institution. What is important to share is the pain we once felt and the joy in recovery we now feel.
3. **A common-sense approach.** Our Fellowship of nonprofessionals firmly resists getting organized. As A.A.s know, we do not have any A.A. rules or bosses. On the other hand, professional treatment settings have to be well organized to do their job and to meet various legal requirements. Their personnel often have to be professionally trained if the agency is to be properly licensed. Staff members do not take their duties lightly. Alcoholism is a grave illness. When we carry A.A.’s message of hope, experience and strength, we know this is serious business.
4. **A cheerful humility.** We simply put the message in front of the alcoholic in treatment. What the alcoholic does with it is not our business. He or she may ignore it or use it. The alcoholic needs to be free to choose without our getting vain if the message is used, or angry or discouraged if it is ignored.
5. **Ability to follow directions.** In carrying our message into treatment set-tings, our personal will is subject to authority in at least two ways: First, the ultimate authority for A.A. work is, of course, a loving God as He may express Himself in the group conscience. Sometimes, for the good of A.A. and for the good of those we are trying to help, we as individuals have to do things differently from the way we might ourselves like.

Second, the professional treatment is in charge of its patients or clients and is responsible for them. If A.A. members do not conform to the rules and regulations of the facility, they may not be asked to return.

So, carrying the message into such places calls for patience and self-discipline, keeping in mind that we need not compromise our Traditions.

1. **Dependability.** Once an A.A. commitment is made to any institution or organization, we cannot let our Fellow-ship down by not living up to the agreement fully. We go to any lengths to perform faithfully the services promised in the name of A.A. We try not to let anything interfere with keeping our word.

What people think of A.A. depends on us. If we are reliable, then A.A. seems so. If we are not, it makes A.A. look bad. Since A.A.’s public relations policy is based on attraction, not promotion, that leaves it up to each of us to reflect the attractive-ness of the A.A. way of life.

1. **Broad knowledge of A.A.** Members who have been to meetings in only one or two A.A. groups in one community may not have a broad acquaintance with our Fellowship. To be the best possible message-carrier, try to visit other local groups.

In addition, a thorough knowledge of A.A. literature and material will be beneficial in carrying our message. The deeper and broader our understanding of all aspects of our Fellowship (including all three of our Legacies: Recovery, Unity and Service), the more we have to offer the troubled newcomer.

1. **Ability to stick to our own business.** Carrying the message to alcoholics in treatment settings can challenge our ability to keep focused on A.A.’s primary purpose, which is “to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.” We are not in the business of educating nonalcoholics about alcoholism, religion, medicine, or anything else.

The A.A. message is carried by sharing our experience, strength and hope. We have no business criticizing any professional agency or person, or telling them how to treat or not to treat alcoholics. Those are not A.A. purposes.

We have the personal experience of alcoholism, which we now share, along with what we have learned about recovery. Our suffering and the recovery we now enjoy can give valuable hope to other still-suffering alcoholics. More than that, giving it away, without any thought of reward, strengthens our own sobriety.

**A few plain suggestions - DOs and DON’Ts**

1. DO — Abide carefully by all the rules of the facility. A.A. members are guests of the treatment setting.

DON’T — A.A.s should not try to claim special exemptions or privileges or try to manipulate the agency into making concessions.

1. DO — Make sure every A.A. promise is kept to the letter.

DON’T — Do not make any commitment that cannot be met. Excuses do not speak well for A.A., but faithfulness and results do.

1. DO — Limit yourself to carrying your own honest message of alcoholism recovery.

DON’T — Do not talk about medication, psychiatry, or scientific theories of alcoholism. This is the territory for professionals. Our own personal spiritual life does not make us experts on religion.

1. DO — Listen at least as much as you talk.

DON’T — Do not argue about anything with patients or staff. Arguments never win friends.

1. DO — Live by the spirit of A.A.’s Traditions.

DON’T — Do not expect any professional agen-cy to govern itself by our Traditions. They cannot and have no need to do so.

1. DO — Remember that you are A.A. to people in that facility. Your language, appearance, manners and mood all affect other people’s opinions of our Fellowship. Your behavior can make sure A.A. is always welcome.

DON’T — Do not give agency personnel or patients any reason to be unhappy about A.A.

1. DO — Always maintain a cheerful humility about how A.A. works.

DON’T — Do not brag about A.A. Let results speak for us.

1. DO — Remember that you “are responsible.” Let the patients know about the benefits of sponsorship, as well as any temporary contact program that may be available in your area.

DON’T — Do not just carry the message to the facility and leave it there.