

# For AA Groups: Points to Consider on Reopening our Meetings

## *Using the 12 Traditions as Our Guide*

*Each AA member may consider reopening differently. Here are some topics we may want to think about reopening after the quarantine. For additional resources, see the Area 30 website at: <https://aaemass.org/area30/>.*

### Topics for Discussion as You Plan for Reopening

*Each group may approach reopening differently. Here are some topics groups may want to discuss prior to reopening.*

- **Our Group Conscience**
  - Have we, as a group, discussed ways to consider all the issues faced by our group in order to reopen?
  - Have we agreed on how to reach group conscience, such as open sharing opportunities as well as voting?
  - For voting, do we want to use “majority rule” or the AA principle of “substantial unanimity,” where we don’t move forward with a change unless we are substantially all in agreement?
  - How can our group balance autonomy while not adversely affecting AA as a whole?
  - What about those unable to meet by Zoom—how are we including them in our group conscience decisions?
  - How can we, as a group, place principles before personalities? Doing “the right thing” is sometimes open to interpretation. How can we ensure voices are heard without arguing over outside issues?
  - Have we provided enough time before a voting meeting to announce what will be voted on, as well as adequate time for those who want to discuss the topic?
- **Landlord and/or Facility**
  - Is the facility ready for our meeting to return? Having a key does not necessarily mean meetings can resume!
  - Did we ask the facility about the safety procedures they want our group to follow (sanitizing, masks, etc.)?
- **Literature**
  - We often pass books around the meeting. Should we consider ways to reduce passing items along? For example, “bring your own book,” or one person reading, or a new service position for book handling.
  - If we do make changes, do we update the meeting format?
  - Should we disinfect shared literature before / after the meeting?
  - Should we put a 72-hour quarantine on lending literature like the Grapevine / La Viña?
- **Newcomers**
  - Do we want to give a handout to newcomers that explains how things are different from “normal” meetings?
  - Do we want to have handouts prepared with safety in mind, such as creating a plastic baggie with items for a newcomer like the group contact list, 7th Tradition information, literature, pamphlets?
- **Anniversaries and Chips**
  - We often celebrate lengths of sobriety with chips, medallions, cards, or cakes. Do we need to consider a different approach to handle coins, cake, cards and pens, etc.?
- **Finances**
  - Some of the items that the group determines to be necessary for reopening may require money (for example, the purchase of cleaning products or hand sanitizer). Is our treasurer involved? Did we confirm we have enough money to buy items to support reopening before setting a reopen date?
  - For the 7th Tradition, do we need to change how we handle money, such as putting the basket in the middle of the room or one group member carrying the basket around the room?
  - Do we have a digital options for contributing to the 7th Tradition or do we want to create one? Did we know there are lots of helpful resources to help us figure this out? (See Resources.) Do we need to update the meeting format or have handout information for group members (perhaps in the 7th tradition basket)?

- **Accessibility**
  - If we have created a virtual meeting, do we want to continue it despite reopening to support those unable to attend the in-person meetings, such as high-risk group members? Do we want to stagger the meeting times/dates so they do not conflict with one another?
  - Some meeting attendees may not be able to wear masks due to a medical condition. How can we support them?
  - Some meeting attendees require additional support due to physical, mental, or social disabilities. How can we support them?
  - What about small in-person meetings for homebound or elderly group members? Is it possible to do this safely?
  - Have we agreed whether we will continue as an online meeting, have a hybrid meeting (eg., Zoom + in person meeting), or meet in person only?
  - If we do change our meeting time/format, did we update the intergroup/central service channels accordingly?
  - How do we include non-AA visitors or observers?
- **Meeting Etiquette and Hospitality**
  - Should we suspend tea/coffee for the time being? If not, what safety measures could your group adopt?
  - Should we provide hand sanitizer? Much of it contains alcohol; is this a concern to group members?
  - What about smoking—can members who do smoke have a safe space to do so?
- **Meeting Format**
  - Do we need to add anything new to our meeting format, such as facility safety guidelines, changed seating arrangements, changes in hand-holding, 7th Tradition, or how to stay connected if not able to come to in-person meetings?
  - Should we add suggestions for additional AA resources, such as General Service Office (GSO), area, district, and intergroup resources and guidelines?
- **Service Opportunities**
  - Do we need to *revise* current service jobs? Following are some options to consider:
    - Should the greeter's role be expanded to offer masks, or hands out 7th Tradition card with online giving options, take-home meeting lists / literature / new meeting protocols / group member phone numbers?
    - Do the Secretary duties need to be revised?
    - GSR / Group Contact: if group does not have a GSR or group contact on file with Area / District, appoint one to stay abreast of changes / updates related to the Area & District
  - Do we need to *add* new service jobs? Following are some options to consider:
    - Spiritual Sanitizer / Safety Person: wipe down contact surfaces such as chairs, tables, doorknobs, bathroom, etc. prior to and immediately after the meeting
    - Meeting Size: Do we create a position to manage capacity and/or ask for volunteers to give up a seat?
    - Designated 7th Tradition Basket Collector: collects and handles money during the meeting
    - Coffee server: consider appointing one person to handle all coffee service
- **Meeting Location**
  - Should we have separate entrance and exit points to allow people to maintain distance?
  - Should chairs be set differently to accommodate local, state, or landlord mandates?
  - Can we consider other options if the landlord does not want the group to return to the space?
  - Should we make plans now in case our in-person meeting gets larger than local/state guidance; for example, can we split into 2+ groups (while still meeting the local/state/landlord guidance for gatherings restrictions)? Do we need to add this to the meeting format so no one is confused when people get up and leave during a meeting?
  - If we meet outside, have we considered how this affects anonymity or confidentiality? Can we meet the state, local, and landlord limits on outdoor gathering sizes? <https://www.mass.gov/doc/safety-standards-for-parks-open-space-and-outdoor-education-programs-phase-ii/download>
- **Commitments**
  - Can we continue to support commitments while meeting the requirements of the facility or other meeting location?

- **Group Safety**

- Have we looked at the *AA Safety Card* to see how it relates to our current situation?  
[https://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/f-211\\_SafetyCardforAAGroups.pdf](https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/f-211_SafetyCardforAAGroups.pdf)
- Do we want to consider encouraging group members to not attend if they are sick?
- Does the group have a plan if members they think someone is sick or exposed yet is attending the meeting?
- Does the group think we should announce if a group member has been exposed, such as at meetings, district, or intergroup? How would we communicate this while maintaining anonymity and confidentiality?
- Should our group be concerned with any legal liability issues? If so, what might these be?
- If masks are required, will our group supply masks for those without one? Will a member be asked to leave if not wearing a mask—can this be handled lovingly and by whom?
- Has your group considered following government regulations in light of practicing the Traditions—specifically Traditions 4, 5, 10, and 11?

*Area 30 would like to thank the following for allowing us to leverage their experience, strength, and hope into this overall document: Area 30 Districts 15/16, Area 48 ad hoc committee, and the Area 30 Delegate.*