

# PHONE VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



## THE VOICE OF ATTRACTION

*“When anyone, anywhere, reaches out,  
I want the hand of A.A. to be there.”*

**Inter-Group Association of A.A. of New York  
307 Seventh Avenue (Bet. 27th & 28th St.)  
Suite 201  
New York, NY 10001**

**(212) 647-1680 (914) 949-1200**

Updated December 22, 2014

Dear Phone Volunteer:

Thank you for your service. This handbook will help you handle the important job of answering phones at the Inter-Group Office. Please review the contents thoroughly. If you have any questions, ask the Hospital Desk Volunteer or any Staff Member.

Most important, you are extending a helping hand. You will sometimes be the first one to bring hope to callers, and say the things they are willing to hear. Because of your recovery experience, you are one of the most qualified to understand their problems, as it states in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

You may be the person who starts someone on the path to sobriety. You will also help those in need to find an A.A. meeting, near them, or around the world for those who are traveling.

Remember we are only carrying the message “If you want to stop drinking, A.A. is here to help.”

Your primary goal is to refer callers to where they can get help. We try to be a sympathetic and understanding.

New York Inter-Group



### **Upon arrival for your shift, please**

- ✓ Check your name off or sign in on the sign-up sheet.
- ✓ Check the bulletin board for announcements of group notices, location changes and upcoming events.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the meeting book.
- ✓ Go through an orientation with the Hospital Desk volunteer.
- ✓ If it's your first time answering phones, sit with someone else for a couple of calls.
- ✓ Introduce yourself to others on your shift.

### **Before you leave, please**

- ✓ Discard all garbage.
- ✓ Leave desk neat, as you found it.
- ✓ Sign up for a future shift!

## **DO'S AND DON'TS**

### **DO's**

*DO* answer phones with “A.A., can I help you?”

*DO* encourage callers to go to a meeting –  
**Our primary purpose isto help callers find a meeting.**

*DO* limit the time of your call to a few minutes.

*DO* encourage family members to call Al-Anon. In keeping with our Primary Purpose, we only talk to alcoholics. Non- alcoholics are better served by calling Al-Anon.

*DO* allow other volunteers to answer their share of calls. Give everyone an opportunity to do service.

### **DON'TS**

*DON'T* give medical, psychological or financial advice.

*DON'T* offer advice on problems other than alcohol.

*DON'T* give out names or phone numbers of A.A. members.

*DON'T* leave messages on 12<sup>th</sup> step contacts' business phones. Only leave messages on personal phones if they've checked it is okay to do so.

*DON'T* make lots of personal calls from Inter-Group phones.

*DON'T* tolerate abusive callers. Hang up politely.

## **Being an Effective Phone Volunteer**

Following are examples of the types of calls we receive:

1. Request for meeting information.  
You will receive instructions for this during your orientation. Meetings are listed in the binders on each desk.
2. Drunks who want help.  
Do not talk for more than a couple of minutes with someone who is obviously intoxicated. Give them a meeting to go to. If the caller is somewhat sober and seeking help, encourage them to attend a meeting. Answer questions freely about how A.A. works. You can also offer to have a 12<sup>th</sup> Step contact call them back. If they agree, complete a 12<sup>th</sup> Step contact form and give it to the Hospital Desk. Do not give the contact names and numbers out to caller.
3. Non-alcoholics seeking information about A.A. or other 12 Step programs.  
The yellow sheets in your binders located on each desk contain useful phone numbers. If the caller is a student, social worker, etc. who is looking to attend an A.A. meeting, give them only “open” AA meetings.
4. People who are in recovery but just need to talk with another alcoholic.  
Be sympathetic but encourage them to go to a meeting to share with other alcoholics. Remember our primary purpose is to get them to an A.A. meeting. You should not be on long calls with people. Politely explain that you cannot remain on the phone but will be happy to refer them to a nearby meeting.
5. Inquiries about “Bridging the Gap”, our program to help those making the transition out of a treatment facility by using an A.A. member as a meeting contact. The Hospital Desk has details on this program.
6. People looking for a meeting in another part of the country or foreign countries.  
Directories are located on the round table in the center of the volunteer room.
7. Someone is at a listed meeting but the meeting is not there.  
Check the bulletin board to see if there is a notice about this group. If not, take down the name, time, day, and location of the meeting and give to the Hospital Desk. They will in turn give it to a Staff Member for follow-up. Refer the caller to another nearby meeting.

If you encounter situations that make you uncomfortable or you don't know how to handle, ask the Hospital Desk or a more experienced volunteer to help.

Difficult situations you may encounter may include:

1. Someone seeking a detox.
2. A caller who is abusive or unsound.
3. A caller who is suicidal, threatening to others, or in desperate need of help.
4. Callers looking for money, food, transportation, housing etc. Refer such calls to the Hospital Desk.

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### **Special Interest Meetings**

The Meeting Binders contain a section titled "Special Interest Groups" (pink pages).

These include men's, women's, young people's, LGBT (gay/lesbian), etc.

There are special interest meetings that are *not* listed in our directories, such as meetings for medical professionals, lawyers, or those with specific medical conditions. Some of these are listed in the binder on each desk, others are kept only at the Hospital Desk. These groups are all Closed meetings.

## **New York Intergroup House Rules**

Although primarily staffed by volunteers, Inter-Group is a Business and as such must comply with all governing laws. Volunteers must conduct themselves as if they are in a business environment. This includes respect for all volunteers and staff. Discrimination and derogatory comments will not be tolerated.

If you feel uncomfortable about conversations around you or comments made to you, immediately report this to a Staff Member. An Incident Report will be provided to you. We take all such matters seriously.

In order to avoid a ‘Hostile Work Environment’, types of behavior that are not acceptable include:

- Use of derogatory terms for people, including slang terms.
- Swearing.
- Reading pornographic material in print or on the internet.
- Commenting on people’s race, religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.
- Touching others other than a handshake if offered.
- Having a personal call that includes any of the above that can be heard by others.

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## **Notices of Temporary and Permanent Meeting Changes**

Volunteers CAN take information from callers regarding TEMPORARY meeting changes. Forms are located at each desk and at the table closest to the conference area. Take *all* information requested on the form, then post it on the Bulletin Board.

Volunteers CANNOT take information over the phone regarding PERMANENT meeting changes or cancellations. These forms must be completed by a representative of the group and mailed, faxed or emailed to New York Intergroup. Forms can be found on our website or they can they can request a form be mailed to them. Please take a message with the request and their name and address if they need a meeting change form mailed to them.

NY Inter-Group  
307 Seventh Avenue Suite 201  
New York NY 10001

Fax 212-647-1648

Email [groupsandmeetings@nyintergroup.org](mailto:groupsandmeetings@nyintergroup.org)

## **Literature Sales**

Inter-Group sells only A.A. conference approved literature.

The Literature Room is open for sales as follows:

Monday - Friday: 9:00 am to 6:30 pm

Saturday: 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

The Hospital Desk volunteer can sell meeting books when the Literature Room is closed.

We also do mail orders.

The Literature Order form can be found on the website [www.nyintergroup.org](http://www.nyintergroup.org).

Sometimes we get calls from people looking for “coins”. We now sell coins.

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## **Office Hours and Staff**

The Office is open 24/7/365 from 9am – 10pm.

Office personnel:

Coco Lee Thuman – Executive Secretary  
[executivesecretary@nyintergroup.org](mailto:executivesecretary@nyintergroup.org)

Rose Garay– Committees and Volunteers  
[committees@nyintergroup.org](mailto:committees@nyintergroup.org)

Walter Gray- Literature  
[literature@nyintergroup.org](mailto:literature@nyintergroup.org)

Groups and Meetings  
[groupsandmeetings@nyintergroup.org](mailto:groupsandmeetings@nyintergroup.org)

Message forms are located in the front of the binders. Please take thorough messages for Staff Members and leave them in the Message boxes located by the bulletin board.



## **People Calling to Volunteer**

If someone calls to offer to volunteer, there are many ways they can do service.

If they have a year of sobriety they can volunteer to answer phones. They can come in for an orientation anytime. The Hospital Desk volunteer conducts all orientations. Once here, they can sign up for a specific future volunteer time slot.

The following shifts are available Monday-Sunday:

- 9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
- 1:30 p.m. - 6 p.m.
- 6 p.m. – 10 p.m.
- Call Forwarding (10 p.m. – 2 a.m.)- See office for further details

If they do NOT have a year, they can still help with a variety of tasks, including mailings.

All volunteers will be asked to complete a Volunteer Information Form upon arrival. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please email [Committee@nyintergroup.org](mailto:Committee@nyintergroup.org).

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## **Other Ways to do Service at Inter-Group**

- Answering Inter-Group's phones in the office
- Answering Inter-Group's phones via call-forwarding at home
- Chairing meetings in institutions (rehab, detoxes, shelters or prisons)
- Speaking about alcoholism and the A.A. program to non-A.A. groups (Public Information)
- Packing A.A. literature for distribution at institutional meetings and serving on the Steering Committee.
- Preparing mailings to groups.
- Service opportunities are also available on the annual Bill W. Dinner Committee and the annual Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Literature Fund Dinner/Dance Committee.