

Marin Teleservice

GUIDELINES

Approved December 2007

"When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help,
I want the hand of AA to be there, and for
that: I AM RESPONSIBLE."

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1. Welcome to Marin Teleservice!

"Our Primary Purpose is To Stay Sober and Help Other Alcoholics to Achieve Sobriety"

If you are reading this packet, you are probably interested in Marin Teleservice. Perhaps you have already volunteered for a commitment - On line, Back-up, 12-step worker, or Teleservice Rep. Or maybe you would like to know how Teleservice works and how you can get involved. We hope this packet will be helpful to you, and on behalf of the fellowship we thank you for your interest in service to Alcoholics Anonymous!

What We Are:

Marin Teleservice is a telephone service which is available 24 hours a day to help alcoholics in need.

Specifically, we refer callers to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and provide current AA meeting directory information. In addition, we see that 12-step workers are called to talk with and/or visit suffering alcoholics when needed.

We are sober alcoholics doing what we can to stay sober and to help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. It is important for us to remember

OFTEN, A PERSON'S FIRST INTRODUCTION TO
AA IS THROUGH MARIN TELESERVICE!

What We Are Not:

We are not therapists, counselors, doctors, a taxi Service, a referral line for other 12-step programs, treatment facilities, or a sober activities directory.

Although we certainly wish to be as helpful as possible, our experience and the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous suggest that we are most successful when we remain focused on identifying and recovering from our problem with alcohol and when we help others to do the same.

How Do I Use This Packet?

FIRST, read this packet through. It is suggested that you have a picture of Teleservice as a whole, so that you can see most clearly how your commitment works within the system. You can best fulfill your commitment with a clear understanding about what your part is. This will enable you to accurately inform and assist others if necessary.

SECOND, focus on the section which describes your particular commitment. See that you understand what it says. PLEASE! Ask the coordinator for your week or someone else you know who has Teleservice experience if you have any questions at all. WE WERE ALL NEW TO THIS AT ONE TIME, AND MOST OF US WERE A BIT NERVOUS AND UNSURE - ASK! WE WOULD LOVE TO HELP!

THIRD, keep this packet available for reference. Some questions won't come up until you have had experience with your commitment.

2. Primary

What Does That Mean?

"Primary" shift commitments consist of once monthly shifts (for example: Week Two, Sunday 2-6 p.m., or Week Four Tuesday 10 p.m-6 a.m. overnight) and the commitment lasts a minimum of one year.

Having the "Primary" commitment means that when a person calls Alcoholics Anonymous at 499-0400 during your monthly shift, the call will be immediately routed to your telephone.

There is a 6-month sobriety requirement for this commitment.

What Do I Do?

- A. You are at your home each month during your shift.
- B. You receive calls for Alcoholics Anonymous in your home for the duration of your shift.
- C. You give out times and locations of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings using a current printed meeting directory, the AA website on line at www.aasf.org.
- D. You share general information about Alcoholics Anonymous.
- E. You connect alcoholics who need more time & attention with your Back-Up.
- F. You keep your interactions helpful but brief so that the AA line is available to new callers.
- G. You keep in mind our primary purpose and share from your own experience.

How Do I Do It?

- A. Make sure you are in your home and that your telephone line is free 10 minutes before your shift starts. Your coordinator will contact you to remind you of your shift a few days in advance.
- B. Our telephone service will call just before your shift begins and say some thing like: "This is the answering service forwarding the line to you." After which point calls to 499-0400 will ring directly to your phone. You may answer the phone in a way that is comfortable to you. Some of us say "Hello, this is Jane, how may I help you?" or simply "Alcoholics Anonymous"
- C. Many, if not most of the calls you will receive will be requests for AA meeting information. Make sure that you have on hand:
 - 1. A CURRENT AA MEETING SCHEDULE
 - 2. A CURRENT 12-STEP WORKER LIST
 - 3. YOUR BACK-UP'S TELEPHONE NUMBER

Generally we will send you a current meeting schedule and 12 step worker lists about twice a year. Please recycle or otherwise dispose of outdated versions. Your back-up's phone number is available from your weekly coordinator. Please record these numbers in a permanent place for your reference.

Although these things are to be sent to you it is your responsibility to have these resources on hand before each shift. If for some reason you do not have them, meeting schedules are available at most AA meetings and the other two resources can be obtained by calling your weekly coordinator or by attending the monthly Teleservice Meeting. Teleservice meets the 4th Tuesday of each month at 1360 Lincoln Avenue, San Rafael (The Marin Alano Club) at 7:30 p.m.

Some of us find it beneficial to keep a map of Marin County on hand also so that we can give directions to meetings when asked. www.aasf.org is also a good resource. (Although this is helpful, it is not required.)

- D. When sharing general information about Alcoholics Anonymous we use the following definition: "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership: we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

Sometimes those calling for information will be the parents, spouses, family, or friends of a problem drinker. We must ask "Does he or she (the problem drinker) want to talk with someone from AA?" If the answer is "No - but he / she needs help!", we express sympathy but explain to the caller that the problem drinker must ask for help and advise the caller to make the AA number available to the drinker.

If the answer is "Yes" then ask to speak to the problem drinker directly.

If more explicit information about AA is desired generally we suggest the caller attend an AA meeting and talk to someone there. In some cases you may choose to have your Back-Up talk further with the caller.

- E. When a caller wants more than meeting or general AA information, it is time to connect them with the Back-Up. You do this by explaining to the caller that you must keep your line open to help other callers, but you will have someone call them back immediately to speak with them further.
(If a Back-Up isn't assigned to your shift, use your resources e.g.; sponsor or support group to find someone to help you.) **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES DO WE GIVE OUT ANY PERSONAL PHONE NUMBERS TO CALLERS!**

Ask the caller for his / her first name and phone number then call your Back-Up with this information. You might also want to give your Back-Up a brief bit of information about the caller. It is now in the hands of your Back-Up.

- F. It is important to be helpful but brief so that you may be available to other alcoholics who need your services. Some of the questions we ask in order to determine how we can help are:"

"Do you have a problem with alcohol?"

"Do have a desire to stop drinking?"

"Would you like to have someone call you to further talk about AA?"

"Would you like to go to a meeting?"

If the caller says yes to questions like these, we may be able to help. If a person is calling about problems other than alcohol we politely but firmly explain that we are here to talk about recovery from alcoholism. It is not in keeping with our purpose to discuss other issues.

- G. When speaking to a caller, we focus on our problems with alcohol and our recovery from alcoholism in Alcoholics Anonymous. Remember, the caller dialed Alcoholics Anonymous. Other services are available through the phone book. As we stated in our opening page, our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. We are not therapists, counselors, doctors, a referral line for other 12-step programs, treatment facilities or a sober activities directory.

Keep in mind our 6th Tradition:

"An AA Group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose."

**AT ALL TIMES IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO REMEMBER TO BE
COURTEOUS AND CARING.**

OFTEN, A PERSON'S FIRST INTRODUCTION TO AA IS THROUGH YOU!

3. Back-Up

What Does That Mean?

A "Back-Up" shift commitments consist of once monthly shifts (for example: Week Two, Sunday 2-6 p.m., or Week Four, Tuesday 10 p.m-6 a.m.) and the commitment lasts a minimum of 1 year.

Having a "Back-Up" commitment means that when a person calls Alcoholics Anonymous at 499-0400 needing more than basic information, the "Primary" worker who receives this call will in turn call you at your phone number giving you the first name and phone number of the suffering alcoholic.

Your commitment is to call the alcoholic in need and to determine how to be helpful. If you find that the caller would like time with a sober member of AA either on the telephone or in person it is your job to call a 12-Step Worker volunteer and connect them with the alcoholic in need.

There is a 6-month sobriety requirement for this commitment.

What Do I Do?

- A. You are at home each month during your shift.
- B. You call your "Primary" partner to report that you are in place and ready for your shift.
- C. You will receive calls from your "Primary" partner giving you the first name and phone number of alcoholics in need.
- D. You will call these suffering alcoholics and determine how to best be of service to them.
- E. You will call 12-Step Workers to further talk with, visit or take the alcoholic in need to an AA meeting if you should determine this is the course to take.
- F. Keep in mind our primary purpose and share from your experience.

How Do I Do It?

- A. Make sure you are in your home 10 minutes before your shift starts
- B. Call your "Primary" partner to let them know that you are home and ready for your shift. Confirm that they have your current and correct home phone number. It is best to call your "Primary" 499-0400 about 10 minutes after your shift begins.
- C Before your shift begins make sure that you have on hand:
 - 1. A CURRENT AA MEETING SCHEDULE
 - 2. A CURRENT 12-STEP WORKER LIST

Generally we send a current meeting schedule and 12 step worker lists to you about twice a year. Please recycle or otherwise dispose of outdated versions. Although these things are to be sent to you it is your responsibility to have these resources on hand before each shift. If for some reason you do not have them, meeting schedules are available at most AA meetings and the other two resources can be obtained by calling your weekly coordinator or by attending the monthly teleservice meeting. Teleservice meets the 4th Tuesday of each month at 1360 Lincoln Avenue, San Rafael (The Marin Alano Club) at 7:30 p.m.

- D. When your Primary calls you with the name and number of an alcoholic in need, write down the information, double-checking to make sure that you have the information written correctly before you hang up.
- E. Call and ask for the suffering alcoholic by the name that your Primary gave you. If the alcoholic answers, identify yourself as calling from Alcoholics Anonymous; however if it is not the original caller who answers the phone it is important to RESPECT ANONYMITY and not identify yourself as calling from AA. Simply give your name and if the caller does not come to the phone, do not leave a message. Let tact and common sense be your guide.

If you do talk with the alcoholic in need, here are some questions we find most helpful:

"Do you have a problem with alcohol?"

"Do you have a desire to stop drinking?"

"Would you like to talk to someone at length about your drinking?"

"Would you like a sober AA to visit you?"

"Do you want to go to an AA meeting?"

Perhaps the caller just wants to talk. Many times, simply spending time on the phone with the caller is what is needed to fulfill your commitment.

- F. If you determine that the caller would like to visit with a sober AA at length, either by telephone or in person, let them know someone will call them back. Then call a 12-step worker from your list to give them the caller's first name and phone number. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES DO WE GIVE OUT ANY PERSONAL PHONE NUMBERS TO CALLERS.**

When calling a 12-Step Worker it is strongly suggested that you call a female if the alcoholic in need is a female, a male if the alcoholic in need is a male. This is for reasons of identification and safety.

When speaking with a 12-Step Worker directly, identify yourself as an AA Teleservice Volunteer and explain that you got their name and number from the 12-Step Worker Volunteer List. Ask if they are available to speak with and/or visit with an alcoholic in need. If they are, give the 12-Step Worker the caller's name and number and any information that might be helpful.

Remember if you do not reach the 12-Step Worker directly please respect their anonymity and do not identify yourself as calling from AA. If you do not reach a 12-Step Worker on the first call, keep trying other numbers on the list until you do.

Once you have connected the alcoholic in need to the 12-Step Worker, your job is completed.

- G. Sometimes after talking with the caller a few minutes it will become apparent that the alcoholic will not need further help.
- H. Sometimes you will find that a person calling would rather talk about problems other than alcohol and is not really interested in getting help for their drinking. It is important for us to remember to focus on our problems with alcohol and on our recovery from alcoholism in AA.

As we stated in our opening page, our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. We are not therapists, counselors, doctors, a referral line for other 12-step programs, treatment facilities or a sober activities directory. *Tradition Six: "An AA Group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose."*

AT ALL TIMES IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO REMEMBER TO BE COURTEOUS AND CARING. OFTEN, A PERSON'S FIRST INTRODUCTION TO AA IS THROUGH YOU!

4. 12-Step Worker

What Does That Mean?

Having a "12-Step Worker" commitment means that your name and telephone number are on the Marin Teleservice 12-Step Worker List of Volunteers, your gender, availability and geographic location are used by Marin Teleservice and San Francisco Central Office workers to connect alcoholics in need of attention with sober members of AA who can spend time with them.

You may be called by a Marin Teleservice or San Francisco Central Office worker and asked to call back a suffering alcoholic who wants help. Part of the 12-Step Worker commitment may be to meet with the alcoholic in person or to attend an AA meeting together.

What Do I Do?

- A. You receive a call from a Teleservice worker asking if you are available to help an alcoholic in need. You may receive a call at any time.
- B. If you are available you will call the suffering alcoholic with the phone number and name given to you.
- C. You identify yourself to the suffering alcoholic and see how you can best be of service to him or her.
- D. If a personal visit to the alcoholic or a ride to an AA meeting is your course of action, you call another 12-Step Worker to join you.
- E. Keep in mind our primary purpose and share from your own experience.

How Do I Do It?

- A. You happen to be available when a Teleservice worker calls!
- B. Write down the first name and phone number of the suffering alcoholic, double-checking to confirm that your information is correct. The Teleservice worker will probably share with you a little bit about what his or her impression of the situation is. Call the alcoholic in need. It is important to note that even if the Back-Up tells you that the caller wants a ride to a meeting or to be visited with a 12-Step call it is still necessary that you call the suffering alcoholic yourself before taking any action.

- C. Call and ask for the suffering alcoholic by the name that your Primary gave you. If the alcoholic answers, identify yourself as calling from Alcoholics Anonymous, however if it is not the original caller who answers the phone it is important to RESPECT ANONYMITY and not identify yourself as calling from AA. Simply give your name and if the caller does not come to the phone, do not leave a message. Let tact and common sense be your guide.

In talking with the alcoholic in need, here are some questions we find most helpful:

- "Do you have a desire to stop drinking?"
- "Have you been drinking today?"
- "Are you drinking now?"
- "Would you like to go to an AA meeting?"
- "Do you have alcohol in the house?"

Perhaps the caller just wants to talk. Many times, simply spending time on the phone with the caller is what is needed to fulfill your commitment.

- D. If a personal visit or a ride to an AA meeting is your course of action, you will need to contact another 12-Step Worker using either the 12-Step Worker List or your personal phone numbers of sober members of AA. Do not go on 12-Step Calls alone!

You will need to get accurate information from the caller as to their location. If a person is very drunk, it may not be advisable that you visit them in this state, for reasons of safety.

Although it may not always be clear-cut, in general our function as the 12-Step Worker is to share our experience, strength and hope by visiting the alcoholic, assisting them in disposing of their alcohol, or taking them to a meeting.

- E. At times you may be asked to drive the caller to a hospital or detox facility. **This is a personal judgment call and not a requirement of this commitment.** You may want to discuss this with experienced 12-Step Workers and keep in mind our 6th Tradition: *"An AA Group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose."*

5. Teleservice Rep

What Does That Mean?

Having a commitment as a Teleservice Representative means that you have agreed to serve as liaison between a regular Alcoholics Anonymous Group and Marin Teleservice.

Marin Teleservice meets the 4th Tuesday of every month at 1360 Lincoln Avenue, San Rafael (the Marin Alano Club) at 7:30p.m. Your commitment is to attend these monthly meetings and to keep your group informed about Marin Teleservice. The length of your commitment and the suggested length of sobriety required are determined by individual AA groups.

What Do I Do?

When you are a “Teleservice Rep”:

- A. You represent your AA group as a voting member of Marin Teleservice.
- B. You attend monthly Marin Teleservice meetings or provide an alternate.
- C. You stay informed and inform your group about Teleservice.
- D. You make regular Teleservice announcements at your AA group about available Teleservice shifts, upcoming Teleservice events, such as workshops, and other related information.
- E. You communicate the need for group support of Marin Teleservice.
- F. You have a clear understanding of what Teleservice commitments entail.

How Do I Do It?

- A. Attend the monthly meetings of Marin Teleservice. When you attend your first monthly Teleservice meeting, someone will be identified as an information source for new Reps, and a 10 minute orientation will be conducted for you immediately following the Teleservice meeting. You can vote on any matter presented during the Teleservice meeting, as a representative of your group. If you are unable to make it, it is suggested that an alternate attend in your place.

- B. By reading this packet, attending the monthly meeting and asking questions as they come up for you, you will become informed about Teleservice.
- C. At the monthly Teleservice meeting, announcements will be made about available commitments, workshops and other events. This is the information you will take back to report to your group.
- D. When making your announcement to your group we ask that you direct people to www.marintelesevice.com to sign up for shifts. You may also pick up Teleservice volunteer forms that can be mailed in.
- E. By attending the steering committee meetings for your AA group, you may find that your AA group has sufficient funds to make donations to AA service organizations. Your information about Marin Teleservice — the service we provide to the fellowship and our need for group support — may be helpful to your group when the group decides how to disperse donations.
- F. One of the services you provide for your group is that of being a resource for the members of your group who are interested in volunteering for a Teleservice Shift commitment. By reading the description of what each commitment entails, you can accurately inform your members about what different types of commitments are available.

6. Handling Relay Calls

The California Relay Service (CRS) makes it possible for hearing impaired alcoholics to use the Alcoholics Anonymous telephone line. To follow are directions for receiving and placing relay calls.

Receiving a Relay Call

When you pick up the phone line and the caller says something like, “This is a **California Relay Service** call,” **DO NOT HANG UP!** The caller is an operator assisting a deaf or hearing-impaired person. The operator is sitting at a keyboard and computer screen, reciting what the deaf or hearing-impaired caller is typing on a keyboard. When you respond the operator types exactly what you say so the hearing-impaired caller can read what you say.

The operator may ask if you’ve done a CRS call before and provide help and instructions.

The operator will tell you what the hearing-impaired person is typing

When the operator says “**Go ahead,**” that is your signal to respond

Speak clearly at a slow, even pace and use the first person as you normally would, e.g., “I can help” rather than “They can help.”

The operator will type whatever you say, so the original caller can read it on a display screen. When you’re done, say “**Go ahead.**” You should say “**Go ahead**” every time you’re finished speaking and waiting for a reply.

The operator will tell you if the hearing-impaired caller is ending the call, or you can tell the operator if you feel it’s time to end the call.

EXAMPLE CALL

Operator: Hello, this is a California Relay Service Call, operator #1234. Have you ever taken a CRS call before?

You: *Yes I have.*

Operator: Ok. The caller says (reading from display screen) “I need to find a meeting today.” GO AHEAD

You: *Sure, I can help with that. What city are you in?” GO AHEAD*

Operator: (reading from display screen) “I’m in Larkspur.” GO AHEAD

You: *Are you looking for a meeting right away or later on? GO AHEAD*

Operator: (reading from display screen) “About 6:30 or 7 this evening would be best.” GO AHEAD

You: *No problem...provide list of meetings...Will one of those work for you? GO AHEAD*

Operator: (reading from display screen) “Perfect. That’s all I need, thank you.” Caller is ready to end the call.

You: *Ok, thank you for calling. Goodbye.*

Placing a Relay Call

Dial **711**. An operator will answer and will assist you in communicating with the hearing-impaired or deaf person you're calling, providing help and instructions along the way.

Provide the **name and phone number** of the hearing-impaired person you're calling and wait for the operator to make contact.

See above example for further directions.

7. "What Should I Do If...?"

Common Questions and Answers from Our Experience

Q. What if I can't make my shift?

A. Call the Coordinator for your week as much in advance as possible.
Do not arrange for your own substitute! This creates major problems and confusion. As a general rule, two missed shifts will result in your shift being filled by another volunteer permanently.

Q. What if I receive a call from someone who is drunk?

A. This is common. We need to remember where we came from and that this may be the caller's first introduction to Alcoholics Anonymous. We respond with tolerance and understanding and try to get an idea as to whether or not they have a desire to stop drinking. If you are Primary this may be a call you will refer to your Back-Up. If you are on Back-Up, this may be a call to refer to a 12-Step Worker. Remember our 3rd Tradition: *"The only requirement for AA membership is the desire to stop drinking."*

Q. What if the caller identifies him or herself as an alcoholic, but wants to talk about topics other than alcohol?

A. If you have tried to bring the discussion back to recovery from alcoholism but have been unsuccessful, politely but firmly state that this line needs to be kept available to the caller who has a desire to stop drinking. At times we have found it necessary to tell the caller we have to hang up now, and then do so. (See page 1 for more information)

Q. Am I required to have worked The 12 Steps in order to have a Teleservice commitment?

A. If you have sober experience on how to not drink one day at a time, you have something to share with a still suffering alcoholic. However you are required to have 6 months or more sobriety. While many of us find it helpful to have experience with the steps, it is not a requirement for a Teleservice commitment.

Q. What if a caller calls all the time and doesn't get sober?

A. We are familiar with these callers, and while it may be frustrating, we continue to treat them with understanding and tolerance. It is not for us to judge when it is time for another to get sober. Continuing to stay sober ourselves is the most attractive statement we can make about sobriety.

Q. What if I'm unsure about taking a Primary or Back-Up shift with no experience?

A. Many of us found it very helpful to spend time with an experienced Volunteer during his

or her shift to get a sense of what is entailed and to have the opportunity to ask questions. Your experience as a sober member of AA is all that is needed to be of service.

Q. What if the caller is yelling, cursing, or making derogatory remarks to me?

A. While it is true that we strive to be tolerant and understanding, this does not include being a willing target for abuse. This sort of interaction is not helpful to the caller and it may be damaging to you. We support you in hanging up on calls like this. Remember that the caller does not have your home phone number. It may be appropriate for you to call your weekly coordinator or your sponsor for further suggestions.