

Virginia Area Convention Guidelines

It has been the custom of the Virginia Area to hold an Al-Anon and Alateen Convention for members of these fellowships. The purpose of a convention is to bring members from all over Virginia together for fellowship and recovery as well as provide opportunity for the public to learn about Al-Anon and Alateen. (Whenever practical, the conventions have tried to have participation from Alcoholics Anonymous to encourage inclusion of our members' families and friends.)

Getting Started:

The Convention Chairperson will obtain the approval of the Virginia Area World Service Committee (VAWSC) to hold a Convention. The approval should be obtained by the Spring VAWSC of the year prior to the event so that the Committee will have sufficient time to pick a date and site and to plan the Convention.

The Committee will find the *Al-Anon Guidelines for Al-Anon/Alateen Area Conventions (G-20)*, published by the World Service Office and available on the Members Website, to be helpful in getting organized. This guideline also will assist the entire Committee in carrying out their duties.

The currently serving Convention Chairperson becomes a member of the VAWSC for the duration of the existence of the Committee. The Chairperson is responsible for ensuring that they or a representative from the Committee attend and report to all VAWSC meetings and Virginia Area Assemblies.

The Virginia Area Alternate Delegate serves as a liaison between the Convention Committee and the VAWSC. The Virginia Area job description for the Alternate Delegate contains further information.

If there is to be AA participation, the Convention Chairperson will work with AA to find a member of that fellowship to serve as an AA liaison with the Convention Committee and help plan the AA participation. It is recommended that the terms of the participation by AA be worked out before the planning begins. If such matters as how AA registration money and expenses will be handled are agreed upon at the outset, there will be no misunderstandings later.

After the Convention Committee is organized, a schedule of meetings should be determined and published to all Committee members, including the Virginia Area Alternate Delegate.

Finances:

The Virginia Area has seed money available for the Convention Committee. Once approval for the Convention has been obtained from the VAWSC, the Committee may request the seed money from the Virginia Area Treasurer.

It is not the purpose of the Convention to raise money for the Virginia Area. Ideally, the Convention will break even or earn a modest profit and return the seed money to the Area [Assembly](#). Any excess earned by the Convention Committee will belong to the Virginia Area and used as directed by the Virginia Area Assembly. Any loss will be paid by the Virginia Area Assembly.

In view of this, one of the first steps taken by the Committee after it is organized will be to create a budget based on reasonable assumptions of attendance and participation. This will allow the Committee to make informed decisions regarding expenses and serve as a guide to subcommittee chairpersons.

[The Convention Treasurer is appointed by the Convention Chairman. That person will open a Convention checking account with the requirement for at least two \(2\) signatures.](#)

[It is suggested that the Convention Treasurer and any other signers on this account be bonded for the lifetime of this account.](#)

[The Convention Treasurer will prepare regular, written reports to be submitted to the Convention Committee at each planning meeting. When feasible, e-mailed reports to Committee members are acceptable.](#)

[The Convention Treasurer will present written reports to all VAWSC meetings and Assemblies. A final Treasurer's report will be presented to Fall Assembly when all bills and expenses for the Convention have been paid.](#)

[It is suggested that the Convention Checking Account be set up requiring at least two \(2\) signatures.](#)

Facility:

In selecting an appropriate facility for the Convention it is important that sufficient rooms or spaces be available for all activities. Some of the activities that need to be provided for are:

- Registration
- Hospitality
- General sessions including speaker sessions and dances as required
- Workshops
- Meals (if provided by the Convention)
- Alateens
- AA (if there is AA participation)
- Fund raising spaces for merchandise sales, silent auctions, etc.

If sleeping rooms are available on site, rates may be negotiated and presented as part of the Convention package. However, it is [Area Convention policy](#) that the Committee [does not involve itself in the making of the actual reservations and that payment for these rooms is between the facility and the attendees.](#) [If any attendees are to be reimbursed for](#)

accommodations, these reimbursements will be made by the Convention Treasurer upon receipt of expense vouchers.

Program:

Because the Convention is open to members and non-members alike, the statement on anonymity **will** be read at the beginning of each event on the program will ensure that all are aware of our Eleventh and Twelfth Traditions.

It is up to the Committee to decide the specifics of the program. Generally the activities will consist of:

Panels or Workshops – The duties of the workshop/panel chairperson are:

- Find leaders for the panels and/or workshops
- Provide information, support and encouragement to the leaders
- Ensure that all workshops use only Conference Approved Literature (CAL)
- Coordinate with the Convention Committee to schedule times and rooms for the panels and/or workshops
- Coordinate where possible the convention theme with the activity
- Ensure that the leaders remain within their budget
- Encourage the leaders to involve the attendees in the activities

Speakers – The duties of the speakers' chairperson are:

- Identify and invite Al-Anon, Alateen and (if there is AA participation) AA speakers
- Arrange for travel, lodging and meal expenses for those speakers who would not ordinarily attend the Convention to be paid for within the budget allowed by the Committee
- Confirm all details with speakers such as date and time for talk, time allotted, normal weather to expect for out of town speakers, any special needs etc.
- Arrange for hosts and hostesses for any out of Area speakers **who duties may include transportation to and from the airport.**
- Arrange for small speaker gifts

In choosing speakers caution should be taken to ensure that not only are the speakers interesting, but even more importantly that they have a reputation for following the Traditions. For example, talking on a subject such as the use of the AA Big Book in Al-Anon recovery would not only be inappropriate but also a violation of our Traditions.

Banquet – If there is to be a banquet the following items are among those that might require attention:

- Type of meal (plated or buffet)
- Menu and cost

- How to handle those members and guests who will not be attending the banquet but who may wish to hear any speakers who will be featured at the banquet

In the event that the venue for the Convention does not have adequate restaurants in the immediate vicinity, it may be necessary to provide meals (in addition to the banquet) at the host hotel as a part of the registration package. This may be handled by the banquet sub-committee.

Alateen – Although Alateens are included and welcome at all events, planning special events and meetings will help attract Alateens and ensure that the Convention meets their needs as well. Coordination of Alateen activities with the Convention program is necessary to be sure that enough Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) are available for all activities.

Providing at least one separate meal for the Alateens (pizza is usually a big hit), a daily Alateen meeting or an outing to a local point of interest are just a few ideas that might be popular.

AA – All AA members are welcome at speaker sessions as well as workshops and other activities. If there is AA participation, the AA liaison person on the Convention Committee may provide additional AA meetings and other attractions such as literature for purchase, workshops and the like. It is important to try to provide a separate room for AA activities and fellowship when there is AA participation.

Registration:

Among the duties of those involved in registration are:

- Design well thought out registration form which will enable members to all arrangements (except lodging) and to pre-pay for the convention as well as any other incidentals offered (such as convention mementoes, banquet, other
- Distribute as widely as possible, in cooperation with the Publicity Committee, both hard copies and electronic copies of the registration form
- Maintain accurate registration records and accounting for funds collected
- All checks and cash will be recorded and regularly deposited into the Convention Checking Account. The Committee may create its own spread sheet for purposes of recording the receipt of registration forms and fees.
- Be responsible for the safekeeping and prompt deposit of funds collected both before and during the Convention
- Pre-register all speakers and any other guests
- Determine procedures and fees for handling walk in registrations
- Coordinate the preparation of Registration packets along with badges as directed by the Convention Committee
- Provide enough members to adequately man the registration desk before and during the Convention

Hospitality Room:

Arrangements for the Hospitality Room should be carefully coordinated with the facility as some sites are more restrictive than others. After determining what food and beverage items are allowed by the facility it is suggested that this committee:

- Create a budget for all expenses associated with the Hospitality Committee
- Take custody of any items from the previous Convention or from the Area
- Prepare list of items that it wishes to be donated
- Solicit donations from members, groups and districts
- Purchase, prepare as necessary and present donated and purchased items
- Determine the hours of operation of the hospitality room being sure that it does not conflict with Convention activities
- Ensure that the hospitality room is adequately manned during open hours including provision for early morning availability of coffee
- Arrange for setup/cleanup before, during and after the Convention
- Arrange to transfer any left over useable, non-perishable items to the Area for future use
- Provide to the Convention Committee an accounting of any funds received from the Committee or from member/group donations

Entertainment:

Some examples of popular entertainment ideas from recent conventions are dances, ice cream socials and trips to near-by points of interest. It is important that such entertainment opportunities not interfere with major Convention activities such as the speakers, workshops and the banquet.

Fund raising:

These activities are important because it is through fund raising that some of the cost of the Convention can be paid for, enabling the Committee to keep the registration fee as low as possible. Those responsible for fund raising will want to be familiar with the Fund Raising section of the *Al-Anon Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27).

The Committee will want to ensure that all fund raising is conducted in accordance with applicable State and Federal Laws. Also it is important that the Seventh Tradition be followed by only accepting contributions from and only selling items to, members of Al-Anon and Alateen.

The purpose of fund raising is only to augment registration fees so that Convention expenses will be covered based on reasonable expectation of attendance.

It is recommended that fund raising items incorporate the Convention Theme. Some fund raising ideas which have recently been used are:

- T shirts/sweatshirts with Convention theme
- Coffee mugs, totes with Convention theme
- Silent auction of gift baskets, miscellaneous items donated by members/groups
- Raffles of donated items like quilts

Taping:

Taping of those Convention speakers who do not object to being recorded helps attendees preserve the recovery messages heard at the meeting. If a taper is selected who does taping on a regular basis, they may offer tapes and CDs from other events in addition to those of the Virginia Area Convention. It is important that these tapes and CD's be in accordance with Al-Anon Traditions.

Publicity:

The success or failure of a Convention may well depend upon the quality of the publicity efforts of the Committee. Since one of the purposes of a Convention is to attract new members to both Al-Anon and Alateen, it is important that publicity be aimed not only to our membership but to the general public as well.

Publicity may be coordinated with the Registration Chair in order to be sure that access to registration forms be offered to all who might be interested in attending.

When using the media it is important to follow Tradition Eleven. It is also important that when using the internet or any newsletters or publications that might be posted on the internet, that personal names and phone numbers not be used.

Among the methods of publicizing a Convention might be:

- Area, Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) and district newsletters
- Area, AIS and district websites
- Distribution of fliers/registration forms at Area, AIS, district, and group levels
- Distribution of fliers/registration forms to hospitals, treatment centers, counselors work places and other places where the general public and possible sources for referrals might see them
- Reports to Area Assemblies, AIS meetings, district and group meetings
- Providing fliers/registration forms to neighboring Areas and the World Service Office (WSO)
- Announcements through media such as newspapers, radio, and TV

Literature:

Arrangements may be made with Area Literature Distribution Centers (LDC) to provide Al-Anon and Alateen Conference Approved Literature for sale to attendees. It has been customary to rotate the sale of such literature between the two LDC's.

Hospitality:

Although it can be a part of registration, some events might benefit from providing separate hospitality or greeting members to welcome attendees. These may be either Al-Anon or Alateen members or both who are assigned to be present during times that registration is open to answer questions, explain the layout of the facility and otherwise provide assistance.

They may help not only with matters regarding the Convention but also be able to help with information about the host city as well as putting attendees in touch with hotel officials for further assistance with such matters as travel.

Decorations:

This committee will ensure that tasteful, coordinated decorations will be available for all activities. Where possible they can help carry out the Convention theme. Some of the needs might be:

- Centerpieces for banquet and dance tables as well as any head or speaker tables
- Flowers or fruit baskets for speakers (may be handled by speakers committee)
- Hospitality room decorations
- Signage for workshop rooms
- Signs for registration or the lobby
- Display of banners with our three legacies

It is important that approval from the facility be obtained prior to hanging any signs, banners or posters to protect the Committee from any damage claims.

Records:

Keeping good records will be a great help to future convention committees. Minutes of committee meetings, copies of hotel and other contracts, [all the Treasurer's reports including the budget and actual income and expenses](#), copies of publicity and registration materials as well as the convention program will prove invaluable to future committees. It is also helpful for the committee to pass on a critique of all parts of the Convention including any problems encountered and suggestions for changes.

These and other records can be given directly to the next committee or to the Area.

Remember that with the exception of following the Traditions and keeping in touch with and reporting to the Area, this *Virginia Area Convention Guideline* and the *Al-Anon/Alateen Area Convention Guideline (G-20)* are just that...guidelines. It is important that the Convention Committee adjust these ideas and recommendations to fit the event and the committee. It is also important that it be a fun experience and an opportunity for all involved to practice and grow in the Traditions and Concepts.

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