



CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING OPENING UP AN AA GROUP FOR FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

*The following is not a mandate issued by Intergroup.
It simply lists the elements of conduct that a group may wish to consider.*

Primary considerations

The primary consideration when discussing to once again open up your group for face-to-face meetings center on the Twelve Traditions and our responsibility to society at large, and to each other. Our Traditions clearly inform us that we exist in two societies. First, we exist within the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, and as such it is suggested that we follow AA's Twelve Traditions – the first of which states the importance of considering the impact of our actions on our society as a whole. The second society in which we exist is that of the governing society of our geography—be that county, state or federal. This society actually has laws to ensure its survival. As with the first society, these laws seek to inform us regarding anything that will be detrimental to the society in which we exist.

Therefore, it will be important for any group considering face-to-face meetings to review the Governors Orders as they currently exist. Those 'orders' will provide the primary guidance a group will need. The Governor, perhaps taking a page out of the AA book, has always said that his 'orders' are *suggestions only*. But as we have learned in Alcoholics Anonymous, *suggestions* are often in our own best interest to follow.

Facility considerations

Like the societal concerns listed above, the 'rules & regulations' of the facility in which a group meets have the effect of being the "rules" a group must live by. They are the conditions under which the group has agreed to occupy the space. And they should be known and adhered to. This will come into play in later item.

Meeting requirements

As is true with all other things in AA, the AA group can operate as it sees fit—*except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole*. What follows are things a group may consider asking of itself and its members:

- **Face Masks**
 - A group may ask those attending to wear face masks, or provide them to those who do not have them. *It is important to note here that the facility may have a 'rule' related to this – in which case it must be adhered to under the agreement in place which allows the group to meet at that facility.*
 - In the event someone refuses to wear a mask, if this is a group decision—they can ask the person to leave, or have someone escort them to the parking lot and hold a meeting for them there; if this is a facility 'rule'—the person must wear a mask



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or leave the facility. To do otherwise would violate the lease/rental agreement and could result in the group losing its meeting space.

- **Gloves**
 - The guidance on this follows the same pattern as the preceding discussion on masks.
- **Social Distancing**
 - There may be facility ‘rules’ in place which should be adhered to if they are in place. Otherwise the guidance from the state Health Department and the Governors Order is 6 feet between persons. Seating should be arranged to accommodate this.
- **Room Capacity**
 - Here the *suggestion* is clear—no more than 10 people per room. If at all possible, it maybe well to arrange meeting times and access to ensure that people do not congregate in a hallway prior to entering a room. Premeeting gatherings to smoke should also follow social distancing suggestions.
- **Sanitizing**
 - This one may be the hardest to comply with. With us drunks it is often difficult just to get someone to clean up the coffee pot after the meeting. Now the impact and importance is much greater! *The suggestion is that rooms be cleaning (meaning all surfaces wiped down) both prior to occupancy and at the end of the meeting.*
 - While many of us loathe the idea of anything ‘organized’—we may have to set aside that loathing in order to get this accomplished. It may be done by a committee (for those who prefer organization), or a rotating select group of members.
- **Contact Tracing**
 - This is something that nobody in AA has any control over-and may be easy to overlook. It is something that the Minnesota Health Department operates. However, there are things we can do to preserve our anonymity tradition and still assist the Health Department in reaching those they need to.
 - **First:** Pass a sheet around at the beginning of the meeting and ask everyone to add their first name only and their phone number. *Inform everyone that this list will be destroyed 14 days after the date at the top of the list* (have the days date there).
 - **Second:** Should anyone test positive for COVID-19, have them give the state Health Department the phone number of the person in the group responsible for the list. Also, they can inform the Health Department agent that they were attending a “*spiritual meeting*” or a “*community meeting*” to help ensure anonymity.
 - **Third:** The person responsible for the list then either provides the state with the list (remember it only has first name and phone number), or agrees with the state agent to call everyone on the list to inform them that someone has tested positive who was in the meeting they attended (and provide them the date of that meeting)
 - **Fourth:** In the event that a person is tested, but has not yet received the results, the group list person should advise people of this and ask them to



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self-quarantine until the results are known. Keep the list for potential further use.

- **Fifth:** The group list person should notify the church or facility office where you meet.
 - **Sixth:** If the test comes back negative – the person with the list can call everyone, including the facility office, that they can be released from self-quarantine.
- **“Blended Meetings”**
 - Some groups are considering holding meetings in which a combination of face-to-face and virtual meetings is utilized. A laptop is placed on a surface and the meeting is “broadcast” to those who enter virtually through one of the virtual meeting platforms.
 - **Prior to the connection being made with the virtual platform, all members physically present should signal their agreement to the broadcast via a virtual means.** Should all members NOT do so—either the broadcast should not be made, or those who object can either find another room to meet or decide meet elsewhere.