

# Al-Anon guidelines

The Shared Experience of Al-Anon and Alateen Members.

## Alateen Meetings in Schools

G-5

This guideline offers tips for Al-Anon members interested in starting an Alateen meeting in a school. In order to use the Alateen name, groups must register with the World Service Office through their Area's Alateen process prior to starting the meeting, and Group Sponsors must be certified. Please review the "Alateen Policy" section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27), and contact your Area Alateen Coordinator for the current Area Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements.

### Suggestions for reaching out to schools

Before meeting with the school:

- Identify willing and able Al-Anons and/or Alateens who want to participate.
- Prospective Alateen Group Sponsors must be certified as Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) prior to starting the meeting.
- Seek guidance and suggestions from the Area Alateen and Public Outreach Coordinators.
- Review this entire Guideline and the Guideline on *Outreach to Professionals* (G-29).
- Contact school personnel (counselor, teacher, principal, nurse, etc.) who might begin the process of forming a group.
- Contact with a school usually starts with a meeting with school counselors and/or administrators.

At the first meeting with school representatives:

- Provide a brief explanation of what Al-Anon/ Alateen is; the outreach DVD *Al-Anon and Alateen's Role in Family Recovery* (AV-31) may be useful.
- Present Alateen literature during initial contact. The pamphlet *Information for Educators – Alateen Meetings in Schools* (S-64) answers many of the questions that educators ask most often about school Alateen meetings. Also have on hand the *Fact Sheet for Professionals* (S-37ES English/Spanish; S-37EF English/French, *Facts About Alateen* (P-41) and *An Open Letter To My Teacher* (OT5).
- If the school is interested in knowing more about hosting an Alateen meeting, one way to inform school personnel and students about Al-Anon and Alateen is to present a meeting on wheels. (See the *Meeting on Wheels* Guideline [G-22]).

In addition, information about Al-Anon and Alateen can be presented at:

- ◆ faculty workshops
- ◆ school assemblies

- ◆ individual health, sociology, psychology, or religion classes
- ◆ articles in school newspaper

One Alateen Group Sponsor shared: "Students are oriented to the program in groups. They are more likely to ask questions and pay attention in small, familiar groups. During the presentation, Al-Anon members, as well as Alateen members from other local groups, speak to the students and answer questions. Teachers may be asked to leave during the question/answer portion to assure confidentiality."

### Facts about Alateen for school personnel

Membership eligibility

- Any young person who feels his/her life is or has been affected by someone else's drinking is welcome in Alateen.
- A young person may attend Alateen even if the alcoholic is no longer drinking or no longer lives with the young person.
- Some young people may have their own addictions and criminal records; these do not exclude them from Alateen. However, it is important to remember that Alateen deals with the effects someone else's drinking has had on the teen. Alateen is not a program for young people seeking their own sobriety.

### Who Attends Alateen Meetings?

Alateen meetings are "closed" meetings. Generally, only Alateen members, prospective members, and the Area-certified Alateen Group Sponsors affiliated with the group may attend.

An Alateen group may hold an occasional "open" meeting for the purpose of introducing Alateen to others in the community.

"Limited Access" meetings are attended by members who meet in locations where our general membership may not be able to attend. School meetings often fall into this category.

Some schools may require a school nurse, teacher, or counselor to sit in the meeting or in an adjoining room during the meeting

time. For those schools requiring personnel in attendance, the group can be considered “open” to required personnel in a limited access setting. (See “Alateen Policy” section in the *Service Manual*.)

## School Regulations

In discussions with your school contact, ask them to explain their rules and regulations for meetings on school property. It is important that the school and the Al-Anon members understand each other’s rules and guidelines, and come to agreement on how best to accommodate both parties’ needs. Remember, you share the common goal of helping the students.

School staff is usually required by law to report certain types of abuse to the appropriate authority. If a staff member is present, making Alateen members aware of such policies at the start of each meeting will enable them to make the choice to limit specific details of certain problems and only share feelings. Alateen Group Sponsors are also required to abide by applicable laws regarding mandatory reporting. (See *Alateen Safety Guidelines*.)

If a meeting is to be held at the school, the school personnel must agree to respect the students’ confidentiality on matters shared in meetings that they are not legally bound to report. (i.e., reporting to parents or other school staff.)

The Alateen Group Sponsor may provide the school’s guidance office (or other appropriate school authority) with the names and phone numbers of the Alateen Group Sponsors, District Representative, district/AIS Alateen Coordinator, Area Alateen Coordinator, and Area Delegate.

## Scheduling Alateen meetings at schools

*After school* – Held after classroom activities. Could be open to teens inside or outside of the school.

*During lunch* – Although students may be available during this period, time limits may impose a hardship.

*Rotating during the school day* – The meeting time rotates weekly so that students don’t miss the same class each week. Students would need to follow school procedures regarding permission slips to attend the meeting. School personnel need to know where students are at all times. The school has the authority to determine who attends, and may require an attendance sheet following each meeting in order to validate absences from regular class. This type of meeting requires greater cooperation with the school personnel.

## Getting started

- Ask the school to designate up to two people who can be counted on to assure the anonymity of the students to serve as liaisons with the Alateen Group Sponsors.
- Explain our Traditions to school personnel so the group can function within their school guidelines and still maintain adherence to Al-Anon Family Groups’ principles.

## Planning ahead for school breaks

Alateen Group Sponsors of school meetings have a secondary goal of integrating the students into Alateen meetings outside of the school for one very important reason: school breaks. Continued attendance is important when school is not in session.



- Find out in advance of school breaks whether or not the meeting can be held at the school.
- Give each Alateen member an Al-Anon/Alateen meeting schedule.
- Make sure the Alateen members have the local AIS phone number, or the WSO toll-free number, for meeting location and times in case it isn’t safe for them to have a schedule at home.
- Arrange for an alternative site during school breaks, if possible.

## Self-support

While Alateen groups may need to accept help from a neighboring Al-Anon group in order to get started, their goal should be one of self-support.

- Inform the school administration about the Seventh Tradition and the need to pay rent.
- Money can be collected by passing the basket.
- If the school doesn’t accept money, literature can be donated to the library, teachers, or school counselors on a regular basis.

## Alateen Group Sponsorship

An Alateen Group Sponsor is an adult member of Al-Anon who attends Al-Anon meetings regularly, is currently certified as an Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service through their Area’s Alateen process, and has made a commitment to be of service to an Alateen meeting on a regular basis. Alateen Group Sponsors encourage the Alateens to take responsibility for their own meetings and to share their experience, strength, and hope with each other. Alateen Group Sponsor(s) must be present to hold an Alateen meeting, as outlined in the Area’s Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements.

Since our program is one of mutual support, the meetings are conducted by the Alateens themselves. Alateen Group Sponsors provide guidance on the Al-Anon/Alateen interpretation of the program.

(An “Alateen Service e-Manual” is available on the Members’ Web site, [al-anon.org/members](http://al-anon.org/members). Resources for the teens in chairing meetings include the “Planning a Meeting” section in *Alateen - Hope for Children of Alcoholics* [B-3], e-Book [eB-3]. The meeting format and “Meeting Ideas” can be found in *Groups at Work* [P-24].)

It is recommended that each group have two Alateen Group Sponsors.

School personnel who are Al-Anon members and meet the criteria stated above may become Alateen Group Sponsors.

Alateen Group Sponsors should be prepared to:

- Arrive at least ten minutes early.
- Sign in and out in the main office or designated area as required.
- Have back-up meeting topics, should they be needed.
- Encourage the Alateen groups to get involved in service at the district and Assembly levels.
- Seek guidance, support, and suggestions from the District Representative, Area Alateen Coordinator, and Area Delegate.

## Anonymity

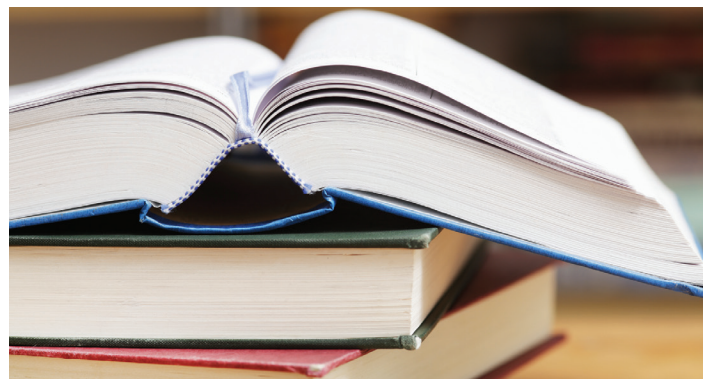
- What is said at meetings, member-to-member or member-to-Alateen Group Sponsor, must be kept confidential. Alateen Group Sponsors and AMIAS who are required by law to report cases of suspected child abuse should let the Alateens know, up front before sharing begins, that they will disclose such incidents that are discussed at the meeting or event.
- The meeting room should be physically situated so that it will protect the students’ anonymity.
- Alateens protect the anonymity of all members of Al-Anon, Alateen, and A.A. Alateen members and Alateen Group Sponsors do not divulge another member’s sharing to school personnel or others.

## Literature

As in all Alateen meetings, the use of Al-Anon/Alateen Conference Approved Literature (CAL) is encouraged.

Arrange for a storage space at the school so the literature is always available. Taking literature home for personal use could break anonymity and may create problems for some students.

One Alateen Group Sponsor shared: “We found that it is not a good idea to allow the students in the program to bring lit-



erature home. We pass out and collect what is used in the meeting, except the *Serenity Prayer* cards (M-26) and the wallet size *Do’s and Don’ts of Alateen* (M-9), cautioning the student to keep them in their wallet.” Another pocket-sized item is the *Just For Today, Alateen Wallet Card* (M-11).

## Suggested literature and materials:

- Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27)
- Alateen—Hope for Children of Alcoholics* (B-3), e-book (eB-3)
- Alateen—a day at a time* (B-10)
- How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics* (B-22), e-book (eB-22)
- Courage To Be Me—Living With Alcoholism* (B-23)
- Paths to Recovery—Al-Anon’s Steps, Traditions, and Concepts* (B-24)
- Living Today in Alateen* (B-26)
- Members Interested in Speaking* (G-1)
- Starting an Alateen Group* Guideline (G-19)
- Alateen Safety Guidelines* (G-34)

## Other suggestions

- It is a good idea for Alateen Group Sponsors and Alateens to prepare group behavior guidelines. They should be flexible and general in tone, but specific enough to inform members *what is and what is not* acceptable behavior during the group meeting.
- It is within the autonomy of the Alateen group to close in a manner the group feels is appropriate. Caution must be used since the school administration could misinterpret closing with a prayer to mean that Alateen is a religious program.

## When a school meeting cannot be arranged

If members cannot come to agreement with the school on having a meeting in the school, or if there are no AMIAS currently available, other options might be:

- Offer a “meeting on wheels” and encourage teens to attend local Alateen groups or Alateen Chat Meetings in the Alateen section of the Members’ Web site: [al-anon.org/members](http://al-anon.org/members).
- Bring a presentation, including Alateen speakers, to a school assembly or health fair. Remember that Alateen participation in such outreach projects must be in compliance with Area Safety and Behavioral Requirements.
- Provide information to teachers and/or counselors on Alateen. They are welcome to use our literature; however, they cannot use our name unless registered through the Area with certified AMIAS as Alateen Group Sponsors.

Keep the lines of communication open with school administration so that their needs and requirements are understood. We may not be able to have a meeting in the school, but we can offer something to help children affected by someone else’s drinking. Things to think about...

School meetings are a way to reach young people who are affected by the drinking of a loved one. It offers another way to be friendly with our friends—professionals in the field of education.