

Al-Anon guidelines

The Shared Experience of Al-Anon and Alateen Members.

Alateen Conferences

G-16

An Alateen conference is an opportunity for Alateen members and Alateen Group Sponsors* to increase their understanding of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions through the sharing of ideas, fun, and fellowship. Alateen conferences give attendees the increased sharing experience of a wider Alateen membership. Alateen conferences are sometimes called Alateen round-ups, Alateen conventions, or other Area-approved titles.

**In this Guideline, the terms “Alateen Group Sponsor” and “Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service” (or “AMIAS”) are used interchangeably to include all AMIAS who are serving at the conference in any capacity.*

All Alateen conferences must be connected to the Area in which they are held.

Much of the information in this Guideline applies also to Alateen participation in Al-Anon events, and to Al-Anon/Alateen participation in A.A. events. For Alateen participation in an A.A. event, Al-Anon must be participating. All events that include Alateen participation must comply with the Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements of the Area in which the event is held. The Area has responsibility for use of the Alateen name in the Area, and must be made aware of all proposed Alateen events. (See the Guidelines *Al-Anon/Alateen Area Conventions* [G-20] and *Al-Anon/Alateen Participation in an A.A. Area Convention* [G-7].)

Structure of Alateen conferences

Types of Alateen conferences

Area conference: The conference is connected to only one Area. The Area’s Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements are adhered to.

Multi-Area and regional conference: The conference is connected to two or more Areas that join together to form an Alateen conference. Involved Areas collaborate in determining the structure of the conference. Alateen requirements for the conference must meet or exceed the Area Alateen Requirements of the Area in which it is held, and all Areas participating in the conference collaborate in developing the processes for implementation of the Alateen requirements. Many multi-Area conferences rotate the location of the event through the participating Areas.

All Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) are required to have their Area’s approval prior to taking Alateens to conferences or other Alateen events within or outside of their Area.

As stated above, all Alateen conferences must be connected to the Area in which they are held. This connection is usually through the Area Alateen Coordinator, who can serve as the contact person between the event and the Area.

Conference board or committee

Some conferences have a conference board that consists of Alateens, Alateen Group Sponsors, and one or more members of the Area World Service Committee (AWSC). This board oversees

the operation of the conference in matters pertaining to the *continuity* of the conference such as adherence to Area Requirements, conference behavior guidelines, problem resolution, insurance, site location, and other ongoing conference needs.

Conference board members for Alateen conferences that are connected to only one Area may be chosen by the Area World Service Committee (AWSC), Area Assembly, Alateen groups, Alateen Group Sponsors, and/or a combination of these resources. Conference board members for multi-Area Alateen conferences are chosen in a manner agreed upon by all of the participating Area Assemblies or Area World Service Committees (AWSCs).

Alateen conferences (with or without a board) may have a conference committee that is responsible for one specific Alateen conference. Committee membership usually rotates each year. The committee consists of Alateens and Alateen Group Sponsors who may be chosen by various methods; this includes being elected by Alateens and Alateen Group Sponsors, designated by the Area, or by a combination of methods. The Area Alateen Coordinator or another Area World Service Committee (AWSC) member often serves as a committee member, advisor, or liaison. The Alateen conference committee is usually responsible for the arrangements of the conference including the program, registration, fundraising, security, etc. The conference committee, in collaboration with the conference board, makes certain that the conference adheres to the conference guidelines as well as the Area’s Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements.

Areas help in providing safety for Alateens and Alateen Group Sponsors, assist in problem resolution, and provide support.

Connection to the Area

Although some Alateen conferences are events that are conducted by the Area, some conferences are conducted by a board or committee that is not directly linked to the Area. **Establishing an official, recognized connection between the conference board or committee and the Area is required.** Areas help in providing safety for Alateens and Alateen Group Sponsors, assist in problem resolution, and provide support. Some Areas have an Alateen conference liaison position that may include a voice and/or vote at the Area Assembly or Area World Service Committee (AWSC) meetings.

Conferences may be asked to provide financial information and reports at Assembly or Area World Service Committee (AWSC) meetings and may be invited by the Area to fundraise at Area meetings or events. Conferences may have an Area standing committee comprised of Area officers that reviews contracts, offers suggestions for the conference budget, and determines the financial impact of proposed conference plans.

Incorporation

Many conferences are incorporated as not-for-profit corporations. One of the advantages of incorporation is that not-for-profit corporations can be tax exempt. In addition, incorporation protects individual board members who could be held financially liable if the conference is not incorporated. Consult a local attorney regarding incorporation. **It is important to remember that incorporation does not affect the need for the conference to be connected with the Area. All Alateen conferences, whether incorporated or not, need to comply with Area Alateen Requirements and must be approved by the Area in which they are held.**

Area Alateen events and/or conferences that use the Area not-for-profit incorporation number so as to be tax-exempt must be financially managed either by the Area or jointly with the Area.

Insurance

Investigate the need for personal injury insurance and liability insurance against property damage during the conference, as well as insurance during travel to and from the site. Some facilities also require insurance. When negotiating the contract for the site, ask if the facility offers liability insurance riders to groups such as Alateen.

It is important that Alateen Group Sponsors who provide transportation to the conference have auto insurance that meets or exceeds their state's/province's legal minimum requirements for insurance purposes.

Ensuring a safe environment

Guidelines and permission/medical forms

- Conference behavioral guidelines that comply with the Area Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements are essential.* These guidelines for both Alateens and Alateen Group Sponsors need to be specific enough to conform to any site or scheduling requirements, yet general enough to allow flexibility. Remember—**all Alateens, even those who are legally adults, are required to comply with the Alateen conference guidelines and Area Requirements when participating as an Alateen.** All attendees read and understand these guidelines before leaving home. The conference behavioral guidelines would include a process for sending home anyone who will not follow the rules.
- All Alateen members are encouraged to remember that their actions reflect on their group, the conference, and Alateen as a whole.
- Alateen Group Sponsors are attending to be of service to Alateen so that Alateens can have a conference. The purpose of the conference is to encourage the growth of Alateen through the sharing of ideas, fun, and fellowship with other Alateens and Alateen Group Sponsors. Al-Anon trusted servants may be the only role models of recovery for some Alateens attending the conference.
- Most Alateen conferences are closed events for Alateens and their Alateen Group Sponsors only. **An Alateen conference with an open meeting(s) should develop a way to identify the Area-certified Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS), and a safety plan to insure that the Alateens are always in their care.** The same principle applies for individuals present to provide services needed, such as a nurse, a cook, servers, facility staff, or invited speakers. If any adults present are not Area-certified AMIAS, the safety plan insures that the Alateens will always be in the care of the AMIAS at the event.
- All conference attendees (adult and Alateen), including the conference committee, adhere to the conference behavior guidelines, and to the Area Requirements. All Alateen members, including Alateen conference committee members, must be supervised by an Alateen Group Sponsor/AMIAS at all times.
- Area processes regarding parental permission forms must be followed. All Alateens not being driven to the conference by a parent or legal guardian are required to provide signed forms. Some Areas require that the medical forms must be notarized in order to meet local legal requirements for treating a minor.
- Alateens should remain at the conference site for the entire conference. If Alateens drive their own vehicles to the conference, they may be required to give their keys to an Alateen Group Sponsor or other designated trusted servant for the duration of the conference.
- A registered nurse or certified first aid person should be in attendance at all times. This person should be made aware of Alateens and AMIAS who require medication during the conference. Some Alateen conferences have the nurse hold all medications and distribute them as necessary for both Alateens and adults in attendance.
- Possession of alcohol or any drugs (legal or illegal) is forbidden at Alateen events.

* Useful tips for forming behavioral guidelines are contained in the *Alateen Safety Guidelines* (G-34)

- Likewise, sexual activity is prohibited for all in attendance while at the conference.

Obeying state/province laws

- Conduct contrary to the law is prohibited. Review local laws on such matters as smoking by minors. If smoking is permitted at the facility, designate smoking areas for adults who smoke, in keeping with Area Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements.
- Alateens and Alateen Group Sponsors should read and become familiar with the *Alateen Safety Guidelines* (G-34). Be sure that all members know how to report problems and are familiar with the conference process for resolving problems. Tags or badges identifying the conference committee and all AMIAS may be helpful.

Sponsor role and responsibility

- All Alateen Group Sponsors should be familiar with their role and responsibility at the conference. This information is often provided in the conference registration packet or at an Alateen Group Sponsor workshop. Some conferences require that conference Sponsors attend a training session before they are allowed to register for the conference; other conferences may conduct a Sponsor workshop at the beginning of the conference. All Alateen Group Sponsors should be familiar with the conference procedures for problem resolution and addressing concerns.
- Depending on Area/conference requirements, Alateen Group Sponsors are usually assigned responsibility for up to five Alateens. Some conferences assign a team of two or more Alateen Group Sponsors to have responsibility for a specific number of Alateens.
- Alateen Group Sponsors support meetings throughout the conference, share information with each other, respond to problems quickly, and connect as Alateen Group Sponsors.

Additional safety tips

- While Alateen Group Sponsors are not parents, it should be remembered that they are responsible for the Alateens they bring to the conference. All AMIAS should know where their assigned Alateens are at all times.
- Everyone at the conference should be required to attend meetings, workshops, and other conference sessions.
- Alateens below the teen years are allowed to attend some conferences. **Consider the ages of attendees when planning the conference schedule.** What may be an appropriate lights out time for a 17-year-old may be inappropriate for a younger Alateen.
- Alateens and Alateen Group Sponsors abide by gender-specific dorm rules; no girls in boys' rooms; no boys in girls' rooms. Age, gender, and sexual orientation should be taken into account in assigning roommates.
- Alateen Group Sponsors provide around the clock security during the conference and specific times for Alateens to check-in with their assigned AMIAS.
- Review behavioral guidelines with Alateens and Alateen Group Sponsors and post in several places where they can be seen by all. It is also a good idea to have the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts of Service posters in main meeting rooms.
- Only those Alateen events and conferences approved by the Area are announced at Al-Anon/Alateen meetings.

Planning the conference

Vision

What is your vision? How can you make it happen?

An Alateen conference can be a tremendous energizer and recovery boost for everyone involved. It is a place for growth, for hope, and for an increased commitment to our younger members. It can be an event that causes parents, Al-Anon members, and the public as a whole to think favorably about Alateen. A conference can also be a sad and traumatic experience for vulnerable children and their Alateen Group Sponsors. A bad experience could tarnish the name of Al-Anon and Alateen as a whole. There are many factors to consider in planning the conference.

Selecting a site

The conference must be connected to the Area in which it is held. Consider the following:

- The ease in traveling to and from the site.
- The financial cost per member.
- The site's safety and privacy features are very important. If the conference will be sharing the site with another group(s), what provision is being made for safety?
- A date should be chosen that does not conflict with any scheduled Area events.

Theme/Program

- The conference theme should be based on program principles, as expressed in the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, or Twelve Concepts of Service. Keep in mind the spiritual purpose of the conference, which is to enhance recovery.
- To generate enthusiasm and new ideas, encourage Alateen members to submit suggestions for the conference theme and workshop titles.
- Local Alateen groups should be asked to serve as host groups to aid in planning and running the conference.
- Special guests may be introduced at banquets or large meetings.
- An inventory meeting should be conducted on the last day of the conference.
- If the conference committee approves the attendance of non-fellowship parents or other relatives at an open meeting(s), read aloud the Anonymity Statement at the start of each session. The conference must also have a procedure in place to limit the access to Alateens by any adults present who are not Area-certified AMIAS.
- Include a writing workshop on the agenda so members have the opportunity to perform public outreach service to potential Alateens as well as share with other Alateens. Contact the World Service Office (WSO) a few months in advance of the conference for extra copies of *Alateen Talk* and sharing sheets. Send sharings with information about the conference to the World Service Office (WSO) for publication in *Alateen Talk* and/or *The Forum*.
- When planning the schedule, keep in mind the spiritual purpose of the conference. The program should allow sufficient time for sleep. Most conferences allow a minimum of six or seven hours sleep per night, with additional time for younger conference members. Mandatory events usually end by midnight.

- The principles of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of Service should be practiced in all aspects of the conference including meetings, dances, entertainment, and other conference-related events. In keeping with the Al-Anon/Alateen focus, techniques used by outside therapies or other 12-Step programs should not be used.
- Conference Approved Literature (CAL) should be displayed and used at the conference. Remember to order literature from your local Literature Distribution Center (LDC) or the World Service Office (WSO) well in advance.
- Speakers may be randomly selected from Alateens attending the conference, giving members an opportunity to share their experience, strength, and hope from the podium. It is a good idea to have copies of the Guideline *Members Interested in Speaking* (G-1) available.
- Some conferences include games with the focus on building unity rather than competition. Games where Alateens experience applying the Traditions while working as a team help build unity.

Letting everyone know

- A permanent mailing address is suggested. A post office box is recommended to insure anonymity and continuity.
- Be sure the Area's districts and Al-Anon Information Services know of the event.
- Plan to mail the first announcements at least four to six months in advance. Your Area Alateen Process Person or Group Records Coordinator can be contacted for Alateen group mailing lists. A second announcement with registration forms can be mailed two to three months in advance.
- Announcements for publication in *Alateen Talk*, *The Forum*, and Area/local Al-Anon/Alateen newsletters should be sent at least four to six months in advance. (Check publication deadlines with each publication.)
- If your Area has a Web site with a calendar of events section, send announcements to the contact person at least two months in advance. Since most conferences are held in locations accessible to the general public, only the conference name, city, state, date, and an Area-certified AMIAS contact first name, conference e-mail address, and phone number should be provided. (E-mail addresses should maintain personal anonymity.) For safety reasons the address of the conference and the name of the facility (hotel, college, campsite, etc.) should NOT be listed on the Web site. Names, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, or resident addresses of Alateens are NEVER provided.
- Setting a realistic registration deadline and adhering to it will help to avoid last minute problems and increase safety. A registration deadline encourages members to plan ahead and reduces last minute stress for the registration committee.
- Send a confirmation letter after the member's registration form is received. Include a list of everything they need to bring and also advise them what is not permitted. Include a copy of the conference safety and behavioral guidelines and an agenda, if possible. Emergency contact numbers for the facility should be provided.

Inviting trusted servants

- Consider inviting a World Service Office (WSO) representative, staff or volunteer, to speak at the conference. The earlier the invitation is sent, the better the chance he or she will be able to attend.
- The Area Delegate, Area Alateen Coordinator, Area Alateen Process Person, District Alateen Coordinators, and District Representatives should also be invited.

Funding

- Alateens, like Al-Anon members, participate in paying for their attendance at conferences whenever possible.
- Areas, districts, groups, or conferences may have fundraising events to provide full or partial scholarships for Alateens or Alateen Group Sponsors who may not otherwise be able to attend.
- Alateen groups may raise money to attend the conference by performing services and by means of activities within the fellowship, e.g. bake sales, car washes, spaghetti suppers, or the sale of articles pertinent to the program such as the Serenity Prayer, slogans, etc. These activities should be held at reasonable intervals and with the permission of the respective Al-Anon groups. (See "Fund Raising" in the Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual [P-24/27].)
- When fundraising by means of individual activities outside of Al-Anon and Alateen, remember that use of the Al-Anon or Alateen name would violate the spirit of the Traditions. For example, members may hold a public yard sale or car wash to raise money; the Alateen name would not be used, and members would donate the proceeds as individuals.
- In keeping with the Seventh Tradition, contributions for attending the conference should be solicited only from within Al-Anon.
- Excess conference funds are distributed per the conference By-Laws or process for making contributions.

After the conference

- The Committee Chairperson will prepare a report about the conference for the next Chairperson. Be sure to include financial, program, entertainment, and other committee reports, thereby letting the next committee know what did and did not work.
- In cooperation with the Area Alateen Coordinator(s), prepare a brief report for the Area(s). Advising members of the success of the conference, the finances, and how problems were resolved gives Al-Anon members the confidence to encourage more Alateens to attend next year.
- Thank you letters should be sent to speakers and any special guests.

Additional resources for Alateen conferences, Al-Anon/Alateen conventions, A.A. conventions with Al-Anon/Alateen participation, and other events with Alateen participation:

- Your Area's Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements
- *Alateen Safety Guidelines* (G-34)
- *Al-Anon/Alateen Area Conventions* (G-20) Guideline
- *Al-Anon/Alateen Participation in an A.A. Area Convention* (G-7) Guideline
- *Members Interested in Speaking* (G-1) Guideline