

VIRGINIA AREA CONVENTION GUIDELINES

(Approved by VAWSC, March 4, 2017; revised Aug. 4, 2018)

Motion from the 2013 Fall Assembly

"The Virginia Area World Service Committee (VAWSC) recommends that the Virginia Area adopt a new Convention Guideline that includes one Area Convention during each 3-year panel beginning in 2016. A Convention will not be planned in years when there is an International Convention. Nor will a Convention be planned on Father's Day weekend.

The new Convention Guidelines may include moving the Convention to destination locations in the Area to renew interest."

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 these conventions is to bring members 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.)

Getting Started: *(See the Virginia Area Job Descriptions for a complete listing of the Convention Coordinator duties and responsibilities.*

The Convention Coordinator will obtain the approval of the Virginia Area World Service Committee (VAWSC) to hold a Convention. If the approval is obtained by the Spring VAWSC at least 18 months prior to the event, the Committee will have sufficient time to pick a date and site as well as 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 Coordinator becomes a member of the VAWSC for the duration of the existence of the Committee. The Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that he or she 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 A.A. participation, the Convention Coordinator will work with A.A. to find a member of that fellowship to serve as an A.A. liaison with the Convention Committee and help plan the A.A. participation. It is recommended that the terms of the participation by A.A. be

worked out before the planning begins. If such matters as how A.A. 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 can be determined and published to all Committee members, including the Virginia Area Alternate Delegate.

Finances: The Virginia Area budgets \$15,000 during each three-year panel to fund the Area Convention. This is done in annual increments to be deposited into the Virginia Area Event bank account. Once approval for the Convention has been obtained from the VAWSC, the Convention Coordinator and Convention Treasurer shall be added to the bank account as signatories. Additionally, all bank statements shall be forwarded to the Area Treasurer monthly after balancing the account. At the conclusion of each Convention, arrangements shall be made to have all statements sent to the Area Treasurer until such time as a new Convention Coordinator and Treasurer are in place.

It is not the purpose of the Convention to raise money for the Virginia Area. Ideally, the Convention will break even or perhaps show a modest profit. At the conclusion of each Convention, any funds in the Area Events bank account over \$15,000 shall be transferred to the Area's general account. If, at the conclusion of the Convention, the balance in the Area Event account is less than \$15,000, then the Area will budget to bring the account up to \$15,000 in annual increments, so that the ensuing Convention shall be fully funded.

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 chairs.

Convention Treasurer: *(See the Virginia Area Job Descriptions for a complete listing of the Convention Treasurer duties and responsibilities.*

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 prepare written reports for 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.

The Convention Treasurer will provide a "reimbursement form" for each sub-committee chairperson to use to be reimbursed for any monies spent out-of-pocket. A cut-off date for submitting these forms will be helpful.

Signature Authorization and Contracts: The Virginia Area Al-Anon/Alateen Assembly Bylaws state that “The Area Treasurer or Area Chairperson shall be authorized to conduct financial transactions in the name of and on behalf of the Organization (Section 3, page 7 of the March 5, 2016 version).”

Therefore, the contract with the hotel and vendors providing services to the Area Convention will be signed by either the Area Treasurer or the Area Chairperson.

Facility: In selecting an appropriate facility for the Convention it is important that sufficient sleeping rooms and break-out 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 or entertainment as required
- Workshops
- Meals (if provided by the Convention)
- Alateens
- A.A. (if there is A.A. participation)
- Fund raising spaces for literature sales, merchandise sales, silent auctions, etc.
- Any displays that may be part of the convention experience

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 sleeping room reservations and that payment for these rooms be between the facility and the attendees.

Program: In light of the fact that a Convention is open to members and non-members alike, the statement on anonymity shall be read at the beginning of each event on the program to 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 Program Chair 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). See the Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, P-24/27 and/or *Why Conference Approved Literature? P-35*).
- Coordinate with the Convention Committee to schedule times and rooms for the panels and/or workshops.
- Coordinate the convention theme with the activity where possible

- Ensure that the leaders remain within their budget
- Encourage the leaders to involve the attendees in the activities

Speakers -The duties of the Speakers Chair are:

- Identify and invite Al-Anon, Alateen and (if there is A.A. participation), A.A. speakers
- Arrange for travel, lodging and meal expenses for those speakers 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. Their duties may include providing 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.

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 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.

A.A. - All A.A. members are welcome at speaker sessions as well as workshops and other activities. If there is A.A. participation, the A.A. Liaison on the Convention Committee

may provide additional A.A. meetings and other attractions such as literature for purchase, workshops and the like. It is important to try to provide a separate room for A.A. activities and fellowship when there is A.A. Participation.

Registration: Among the duties of those involved in registration are:

- Design a well thought out registration form which will enable members to make all arrangements (except lodging) and to pre-pay for the convention as well as any other incidentals offered (such as convention mementos, banquet, other meals if offered, etc.).
- 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.
- Design a spreadsheet where registration forms and fees as well as any other paid activity is recorded: e.g. banquet, other meals, merchandise, etc.
- Record and retain a copy of all checks received.
- Attach the check copies to the copy of each appropriate deposit slip.
- Under the direction of the Convention Treasurer, deposit all checks/monies promptly into the Area Convention checking account both before and during the Convention. 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.
- Coordinate the preparation of Registration packets along with badges as directed by the Convention Committee.
- Provide enough members to staff the registration desk efficiently and comfortably 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:

- Determine all the expenses that need to be covered with the Hospitality Room budget.
- Take custody of any items from the previous Convention or from the Area.
- Prepare a 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.
- Ensure that the hospitality room is adequately staffed 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 the Convention Committee with an accounting of any funds received from the Committee or from member/group donations.

- Provide the Convention Treasurer with all receipts that need reimbursement. (The Convention Treasurer will have a form for this use).

Entertainment: Some examples of popular entertainment ideas from recent conventions are dances, ice cream socials, no-talent talent show, movie night, karaoke, game night, and trips to nearby 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 covered, 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 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 and handmade items donated by members and 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 CDs 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 may be interested in attending.

Methods of publicizing a Convention might include:

- Area, Service Center (AIS and LDC), and District Newsletters and 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 to 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 LDCs in the Virginia Area.

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 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
- Placement of the Area Public Outreach Display

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 which could include the budgets 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, to the Area, or stored on the Convention Dropbox.

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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