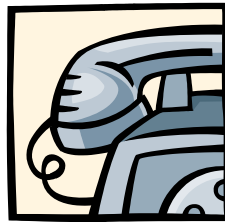


CSO Brisbane



AA Helpline Volunteer Kit

“I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that I am responsible.”



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To be of greatest service, please read this kit through carefully.

1. Summary Overview

Thank you so much for your commitment to AA, the still-suffering alcoholic and to your own recovery by volunteering on the Brisbane AA Helpline. *To be of greatest service, please read the following carefully.*

Responsibility

Once you have committed to volunteering for the Helpline Roster we appreciate you sticking to your commitment, making it a priority in your life to do your shift reliably & regularly. "I am responsible when anyone anywhere reaches out for help I want the hand of AA to be there and for that I am responsible." "Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety." The Helpline is the top priority of the Brisbane CSO.

Reminders

Please take responsibility to make your own reminders. When you receive your Helpline Roster immediately check it carefully against your own work shift roster / appointment diary. Please take care to note if your shift is on a Public Holiday (marked with ***), which means it will be from 10am to 10pm. The Helpline Chairperson will endeavour to find volunteers to split the day into different shifts, and will advise you and your rostered Helpline Co-Coordinator of these changes. Please place your own reminders in your calendar, computer, diary, mobile phone or put the roster on your fridge. The CSO procedure is to remind you the day before you are rostered, or the Friday before in the case of weekends and Mondays. This is a courtesy reminder; please do not rely on that reminder getting through 100% of the time.

Replacement

If you are unable to do your shift for any reason please contact CSO as soon as possible to allow enough time to find a replacement. Night shifts cannot be 'split' as the Phone Co-ordinator may not be available in the middle of a shift to do the extra diversion.

Records

It is NOT necessary for you to keep a record of call unless you have:

- 1) A message to pass on, e.g. Caller left message on message bank and has not yet been followed up.
- 2) An unresolved issue, e.g. Not able to find a 12 step contact person for the caller yet.
- 3) A complaint, e.g. About Helpline not being 24 hours.
- 4) A caller that has been referred to emergency services. (see section 4)
- 5) You have instigated a call trace.(see section 4)

Please record any of the above and pass these back to CSO by email admin@csobrisbane.org at the end of your shift so it that it can be followed up if required and so we can improve our services.

Resources/ Preparation

It is *essential* you have the **current** issue of 'Your Pathfinder' magazine at hand when taking the phones. The meetings list includes phone numbers of members for a particular meeting. These numbers can be used in the same way as the phone numbers as on the 12 step contact list. 'Your Pathfinder' also carries other essential information such as the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions, contact details for the CSO's around Australia and regional contacts. It also includes including 60/30/10 details and addresses. The simplest way to ensure that you always have the latest issue is to *subscribe*. (www.csobrisbane.org).

The meetings list (without phone numbers) is also on the meetings search on the National website (www.aa.org.au). This changes daily so please ensure that you provide current information..

You will also be given a 12 step contact list; these are AA members who have volunteered to take calls. This list is updated regularly and sent to Helpline Volunteers.

Read & Review

Make sure that you have the current AA Helpline Kit (check the date at the top of this page, it should be less than a year old), new revisions would new phone numbers and processes, please read and review it. This has important information for doing the phones such as referral numbers. In particular note the following:

- The main purpose in speaking to an alcoholic is to get them to a meeting.
- Regularly re-read the section "What AA Does Not Do".
- Know where the Emergency procedure is (page 7 of this kit).

Restraint

- Maintain a calm, polite phone manner.
- Remember **NOT** to give out any phone numbers of members from the 12 Step Contact List or Your Pathfinder in any circumstances.
- Keep the line free by not talking to anyone too long. Take the name & number and get a contact person to call them back if they want to talk.
- We are not professional counsellors or doctors. Do not give medical advice about medication or anything else. Refer the caller to professionals after stating Tradition 6 (non-affiliation).

2. Helpline Calls

2.1 Standard Helpline Call

The Alcoholics Anonymous Helpline is strictly for dispensing information about the AA fellowship, meetings and recovery. We must always remember that we are only a recovering alcoholic sharing our experience, strength and hope. As volunteers, we are not professional crisis counsellors, doctors or psychologists etc, and do not have the right to give professional advice.

Preparation

Always have a current ‘**Your Pathfinder**’ magazine; this has key information for general enquiries such as office details, Queensland AA meetings and coming events. You will also need a current **contact list** of fellow Helpline volunteers, a **street (or online) directory** and a pen and paper to record any calls should you need to refer in the future or require follow up. It is a good idea to read Chapter 7 of the Big Book ‘Working with Others’ before making or taking any calls.

Taking a Call – Alcoholic / Non-Alcoholic

On receiving a call for help, ask them to identify whether the call is for himself or herself or for someone else with a drinking problem. Should a non-alcoholic wish to help the alcoholic we suggest it would be beneficial that they contact Al-Anon. (See section below “Friend or Family Member”).

If calling on behalf of themselves, we acknowledge what the caller is saying and feeling. Do not use judgmental words or preach to the caller.

1. Our primary objective is to get the alcoholic to a meeting
2. The program works
3. We were once suffering ourselves
4. We care and are willing to help

Refer alcoholic to a meeting

Ask what area they live in and give the caller the information (time, location and directions if needed) about the next available meeting in their area. Take a few moments to explain to the caller what he / she can expect at a meeting. Include the structure / format of the meeting (e.g. Speaker / topic / Big Book etc). It is helpful to go into some detail to make them feel as comfortable as possible. Reading the **Preamble** (back cover of ‘Your Pathfinder’), can be helpful emphasising the voluntary aspects such as no fees or dues. Conclude by saying, *“To get the most out of the meeting, try to get there a few minutes early. If you need further help, give us a call again. You’ve done the right thing by calling us. I will / won’t be at that meeting. I’m looking forward to meeting you.”*

Using the 12 Step Contact List

Take their name and phone number, explain you’ll get someone to call them back ASAP. Then consult the contact list in order to find someone in his or her local area to continue the call. **Under no circumstances are numbers on the contact list to be given out to anyone !**

- AA experience suggests that it is better to put men in touch with men & women in touch with women.
- Should you be unable to get a contact locally, continue to look for contacts in the other areas.
- As some of our members on the contact list have given their work numbers or share house with non-AA members, **it is recommended not to identify as an AA member until you’ve made contact with the person in question.**

2.2 Talking to an Alcoholic – Types of Calls & Responses

Intro to Types of Calls

The following section illustrates several types of calls commonly received by phone volunteers. These outlines are offered as **examples** of appropriate responses in various situations. On the following pages, possible responses appear in *Italics*. Listen and respond to the caller. A suffering alcoholic will probably indicate that he / she wants information or help. It is important to keep in mind that calls may not follow exactly the dialogue detailed in this section. However, familiarity with this information will make it easier to respond appropriately and to serve within the spirit of the 12 traditions of AA.

Alcoholic asks for information about AA

Answer the caller's questions. If you sense that the caller wants more, ask *"Do you have any more questions about Alcoholics Anonymous?"* After the caller has asked all of his / her questions, and you sense that the caller wants to continue the conversation, then ask, *"Do you want help to quit drinking?"*

Alcoholic is Interested in Getting Help

Briefly tell the caller what the Helpline process is about e.g. *"There are recovering alcoholics in the fellowship of AA who will talk to you further. I have to contact one of them who will then call you back."* Complete the log sheet. *"May I have your first name and telephone number etc. Stay by your telephone and someone will call you back as soon as possible. You've done the right thing by calling us."* Call the appropriate Helpline contact person and give them the information as collected. If you have called all the people on the contact list who are the same gender as the caller, and have not found one available, call the alcoholic back and respond *"I am unable to reach anyone right now. Would you like to talk with me for a while, or do you want someone to call you in a few hours to talk with you?"* If the caller wants to keep talking, listen and express your concern. Conclude the call by stating *"I'll keep trying to reach someone who can call you as soon as possible. Again, you did the right thing by calling us. If you need more help, call us back,"* Keep trying to find a contact person available to return a call to this person. If by the end of your shift you haven't found someone to return the call, send an email to CSO admin@csobrisbane.org They in turn will continue to try to find a volunteer available to return the call.

Alcoholic is not interested in Getting Help

Conclude the call by saying *"When you are ready, we are here to help you. Our program works for those who want to stop drinking. Always remember that there is a way out."*

Caller asks for Help Beyond AA

If the caller wants help that is beyond the scope of services that AA can provide (e.g. Detox, rehab etc) give them one or more of the telephone numbers from the reference phone list in this kit. Before providing any referral number, always explain Tradition Six about non-affiliation. We do not get involved in any detail about this outside help, beyond sharing our own experience. We cannot recommend one facility or organisation over another; we cannot get involved in describing in detail the programs of any outside help.

Caller gives Excuses

If the caller says they are too hopeless: *"It won't work for me, I'm too far gone"*, you can respond *"I felt that way too, however, with the help of AA, I don't have to drink today."* If the caller uses other excuses, *"I can't go because I have family or work obligations; my wife / husband doesn't approve etc"* you can respond *"It sounds like if you don't get help you may not be able to keep your family, job etc"* After discussing the callers reasons for not going to a meeting, and some possible solutions, ask the caller, *"Do you want to go to a meeting or would you like to talk to someone else further about AA?"* For a response refer to the section **'Alcoholic is Interested in Getting Help'** above.

Alcoholic is not sure if they want to stop drinking

Respond empathetically. Share a little about what it was like, what happened and what it is like today. You might sum it up by saying, *"There was a time in my life that I thought I'd never be able to stop drinking. However, since I found AA, I haven't had to have a drink. Would you like to go to an AA meeting or talk further to another member of AA?"*

Alcoholic won't go to a meeting

Ask them "*Why not?*" The following are examples of ways to respond to excuses for not going to a meeting. The alcoholic's questions and statements may sound like he / she is not ready yet, but remember the caller has already expressed that he / she needs help. Our intention is to help the caller focus on the solutions, rather than the problems keeping him / her from attending meetings. If the caller is on guard, "What happens at a meeting?" respond "*We are a group of sober alcoholics who meet regularly to help each other stay sober a day at a time. Alcoholics share about what it was like and what life is like today. You aren't required to do or say anything.*" If the caller presents obstacles, "My car doesn't work, etc" respond "*Does this problem have a solution? I **may** be able to find you a ride to a meeting.*" If the caller says they are too scared, respond, "*You're not alone. During my first meeting I felt so self-conscious I was afraid to say anything. You don't need to worry, we're all pretty friendly.*" Try to arrange for a volunteer to meet them at a meeting. If the caller says that they are still drinking: "I can't stay sober long enough to go to a meeting." Respond, "*If you want to stop drinking, then you are welcome. We ask that you have no alcohol with you during the meeting.*" If someone can't make it to a meeting, **some** people on the contact list are willing to make home / hospital visits. It is also possible they may need a detox unit.

Handling crisis calls

Although most calls are routine in nature, occasionally a crisis call may arise. Always take these calls seriously. If it is a life-threatening crisis, please refer to the Emergency Call procedure at the end of this Kit. If you have established that a caller is in need of some other service (e.g. Counselling or accommodation), you can quickly refer the caller to the appropriate number from the reference list.

Caller asks for free literature

It is suggested that the alcoholic can go along to their closest meeting and obtain literature from there, this gives them better exposure to AA. Often students will call asking for information to be sent out, or ask for information over the phone. We do **not** send out free literature to students. They are most welcome to visit the office and purchase literature or peruse the National AA website (www.aa.org.au). In regards questions over the phone, it is best to **keep the phone line open for the sick alcoholic in need**, explain to the student that they may purchase literature or attend an open meeting. Another option is to speak to a willing member in person at a later date. They can call the CSO during office hours to arrange this on 07 3255 9962. Any group or individual wanting to buy literature can put their request in writing with accompanying payment and return address. (Orders will not be filled unless payment sent includes postage.)

Caller wants us to send literature to a possible alcoholic

We don't send literature to someone who hasn't asked for it, nor will we visit someone who hasn't asked for help themselves. The plea for help needs to come from the person in question.

2.3 Requests for AA Public Information

Give a brief description of AA (e.g. The AA Preamble found on the back cover of 'Your Pathfinder'), to callers requesting presentations, special meetings, literature, activities etc. Also explain that these requests will be referred to the AA member designated to handle such calls. **Never** make these types of commitments on your own. Take the name, number, etc of the caller, and pass it along accordingly (usually to the Office Manager at the C.S.O.). In the event that a member of the media contacts the Helpline, request help from the public information service in your C.S.O., district or area.

2.4 Personal Calls for Individuals

If the caller wants to meet with or talk to a specific individual in AA, politely tell them "*It is our policy that we cannot accept personal messages, and I cannot give out the telephone number of anyone who may or may not be in the fellowship*". Keep in mind that the **anonymity** of our members is very important, and we must **never** acknowledge anyone's membership in our fellowship; either directly or indirectly.

2.5 Talking to a Friend or Family Member

Calls from Friends and Family Members

Many calls come from family members or friends who are concerned with the welfare of the alcoholic. We must remember that our primary purpose is to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. If the alcoholic is there and willing to talk with you, great. If not, suggest that the family member attend an **open** meeting to find out more about AA. It can be suggested that the caller bring along the alcoholic who is still

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suffering. Second, the family member can be asked to give the Helpline number to the alcoholic. Family members often want us to talk to an alcoholic who is unwilling to do anything about his / her problem or they want us to call on them personally. We cannot do this. Tell them that the alcoholic needs to call us or be willing to get on the telephone. We can only help someone who is willing to help him or her. If the family member persists in telling us how they are feeling, refer them to the appropriate number from the reference list (e.g. **Al-Anon**). Remember to treat the family member or friend with kindness and patience.

Friend or Family Member Crisis Calls

Always take crisis calls seriously. If a caller is calling on behalf of someone in a crisis, you can refer them to the appropriate telephone number from in reference phone list. When the person writes the number down, say, *“When the crisis passes, give our telephone number to your loved one and suggest he or she call AA to hear about recovery from alcoholism”*. Although most of the calls taken by phone volunteers are routine, occasionally a crisis call may arise. (Please also note the Emergency Procedure at the back of this Kit.)

Does the Alcoholic want help?

Find out if the alcoholic friend or family member wants to stop drinking.

Yes: If the answer is yes and he / she would like to hear about recovery then ask to talk to them directly. (See ‘Talking to an alcoholic’ section).

No: If the alcoholic doesn’t want to stop drinking or come to the telephone, tell the caller, *“We cannot do anything for your loved one until they want to stop drinking, the alcoholic must want help. However there is a program for the family and friends of alcoholics (Al-Anon). I can tell you how to contact them if you would like”*. NOTE: Always briefly explain our 6th tradition. *“AA is not affiliated nor recommends any other organisation. We simply provide alternate telephone numbers to callers who need services other than AA.”*

Answer questions about AA politely, but **don’t tie up the phone for too long**. *“We need to clear the line now in case an alcoholic is trying to call us. Feel free to attend an open meeting if you would like to find out more about AA. Your loved one may wish to attend with you.”*

3. What AA Does & Does NOT Do

3.1 What AA Does

1. AA members share their experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem; they give person-to-person service or "sponsorship" to the alcoholic coming to AA from any source.
2. Our program, set down in our Twelve Steps, offers the alcoholic a way to develop a satisfying life without alcohol.
3. This program is discussed at AA Group meetings:
 - a. Open "identification" meetings - open to anyone, alcoholic or not. At “ID” meetings, AA members tell their stories; they describe their experiences with alcohol, how they came to AA and how their lives have changed as a result. (Attendance at an open AA meeting is a good introduction to AA, to learn what AA is, what it does and what it does not do.)
 - b. Open discussion meetings - one member speaks briefly about his or her drinking experience and then leads a discussion on any subject or drinking-related problem anyone brings up.
 - c. Closed meetings are for members of AA and anyone who has, or thinks they have, a drinking problem. They are conducted in the same way as their equivalent open meetings but, as stated, attendance is restricted to members of AA or people who have, or think they have, a drinking problem.
 - d. Step meetings - discussion on the Twelve Steps of AA.
 - e. AA members also take meetings into prisons, hospitals, rehabs and the like.
 - f. AA members are sometimes asked to conduct informative meetings about AA to hospital staff, Rotary, Apex and similar organisations. Such meetings about AA are not part of AA's recovery programme.

3.2 What AA does NOT do

AA does not:

- furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover
- solicit members
- engage in research
- join councils of social agencies
- follow up or try to control its members
- compile a register of members

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- make medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses
- provide drying-out or nursing services, hospitalisation, drugs or any medical or psychiatric treatment
- offer religious services
- engage in education about alcohol
- provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money or any other welfare or social services
- provide domestic or vocational counselling
- accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-AA sources
- provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, etc

4. Crisis & Emergency Procedures

Although most of the calls received by the phone volunteer are routine in nature, occasionally a crisis call may arise. Always take these calls seriously.

If you get a Crisis Call

If you have established that a caller is in need of some crisis service (e.g. Counselling or Accommodation), you can refer the caller to the appropriate number from the reference list on the previous page. Advise them clearly and firmly that they need to contact a service staffed by people trained to deal with their needs. **Do NOT engage in conversation with callers in these situations. Leave it to those who are trained in these specialised roles.** If a caller despondently says “*So you are refusing to help me, are you?*” you can reply “*I am helping you by referring you to someone trained to deal with your situation*”.

If the caller Threatens Suicide

Regardless of what we think, **whenever a person threatens suicide**, we have to take them seriously and go into the following procedure.

- If the caller is willing and able – ask them to call ‘000’ for police or ambulance.
 - If they are not willing and / or able to call 000 themselves, then follow the procedure below.
1. Try to keep the caller on the line, and try to get their name and telephone number.
(Their phone number will usually show up on your mobile)
 2. Call '000'.
 3. Explain who you are and where you are from (Alcoholics Anonymous) explain the situation and any helpful information. i.e. The caller's name and phone number, gender (male or female), the time and duration of call etc
To enable a call trace.
 4. To enable a call trace - if the caller is not on line and you don't have their phone number inform 000 that they called the AA Helpline number 07 3255 9162. (The Helpline Number is already diverted to your phone number.)
 5. Report the incident to CSO by email to admin@csobrisbane.org

5. CSO Contact details

Central Service Brisbane Incorporated ABN 407 797 958 02

Web: www.csobrisbane.org

Email: admin@csobrisbane.org

Address: : Library Annexe, 450 Ipswich Road, Annerley QLD 4103

Mail: PO Box 299, Annerley, QLD 4103

Office: 07 3255 9962 Mon – Fri 10am - 6pm

Helpline Brisbane: 07 3255 9162 (7days) 10am - 10pm or 1300 222 222 (National Number)

6. Referral Phone Numbers:

When providing these numbers, always explain that AA is not affiliated with, nor does it recommend any other organization, institutions, emergency services, agencies or programs. We simply provide alternate telephone numbers for those callers who need services other than Alcoholics Anonymous.

12-Step Organisations	
ACOA (Adult Children of Alcoholics)	3321 1151
ATODS (Alcohol and Drug Counselling Services)	1800 177 833
Al-Anon Family Groups	07 3890 1244 / 1300 252 666
Co-Dependents Anonymous	3321 0338 / 0422 482 796
CSI Anon (Chroming, Sniffing & Inhalant Abusers Anonymous)	0438 457 376
Emotions Anonymous	0500 567 766 / 0422 482 796
Gamblers Anonymous	0467 655 799
Nar-anon Family Groups	3030 8403 / 3211 3115
Narcotics Anonymous	3391 5045 / 1300 652 820
Overeaters Anonymous	1800 172 060 / 3229 6977
Sex & Love Addicts Anonymous	3366 7836
Crisis Organisations	
Alcohol & Drug Info Service/Counselling (Biala) – 24 hours	1800 177 833 / 3837 5600
Crisis Care	3235 9999
Domestic Violence Crisis Line	1800 811 811 (F) / 1800 600 636 (M)
Drug Arm – Office hours	1300 656 800
Grow (Mental Health)	3394 4344
Lifeline	13 11 14
Mission Australia Help Line – 24 hours	1300 886 999
Salvo Care Line	3831 9016
Self Help Queensland Office	3344 6919
Women's Legal Service	3392 0670
Youth Emergency Services	3630 4971 / 3260 7626
Homelessness Service Corner 62 Peel St South Brisbane	3036 4444
Detoxification & Rehabilitation Centres	
Palm Beach Currumbin Clinic (Gold Coast)	5534 4944
Fairhaven Rehab & Detox Unit (Gold Coast)	5630 7939
Goldbridge Rehabilitation Services (Gold Coast)	5591 6871
IARC Denmark Hill (Ipswich Alcohol Rehab Centre) (Men only)	3282 7373 / 1800 846 643
Logan House (Logan)	5546 3900 / 1300 727 957
Qld Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Rehab Centre (New Farm)	3358 5855
Mirikai Rehab (Gold Coast)	5535 4302 / 1300 727 957
Moonyah Recovery Services (Red Hill) Detox / Rehab	3369 0355 / 3369 0922
The Haven (Coorparoo) Men Only	3394 2265
Toowoomba Rehab Sunrise Way	4638 9091
Hostels	
Anglican Women's Hostel	3358 4444
Crana House	3262 2402
Gillies House (Auchenflower) Men only	3876 7329
Glen Haven Refuge (Women & Children)	3350 3455
Hannah's House (Female Youth Emergency Shelter)	3812 1395
Othila's Young Women's Housing & Support Service	3847 9633
Pindari – Salvation Army (Spring Hill) Men / Women	3832 1491 / 3832 6073
Ozcare (West End) Men Only	3028 4350
Emergency Detox Units / Hospitals	
Brisbane Private Hospital (Spring Hill) / Damascus Unit	3834 6111 / 3834 6475
PA Hospital (Woolloongabba) / Alcohol & Drug Assessment Uni	3240 2111 / 3240 5191
Royal Brisbane (Herston) / HADS Unit	3636 8704 / 3636 7672