

Napa Valley Intergroup – Group Resource

CONSIDERATIONS FOR RESUMING IN-PERSON MEETINGS

Introduction

Many of us have had conversations that include the question: in what circumstances will we return to in-person meetings? This includes when and how. Napa Valley Intergroup's (NVIG) responsibility is not to dictate those terms, but to be a resource to help the respective meetings facilitate their own informed group conscience.

It is important to note that California's Stay at Home Order applies statewide and sets a floor on what the County can do. Local health officers can adopt stricter public health orders as warranted by local conditions, but **cannot be less restrictive than the State Order**. The State Order applies in Napa County, and limits business and recreational activities, separate and apart from the County Shelter at Home Order. This means that for groups to make informed decisions, they must first review requirements and guidelines from:

1. The meeting location – call/email your point of contact
2. [Napa County Public Health. See links to Napa County's General and Business FAQs here:](#)

General:

<https://www.countyofnapa.org/DocumentCenter/View/17687/General-Shelter-at-Home-FAQs-ENGLISH?bidId=>

Business:

<https://www.countyofnapa.org/DocumentCenter/View/17688/Stage-2-Business-Ops-FAQs-ENGLISH?bidId=>

3. [California Department of Public Health](#)

Looking Ahead

What other AA groups are doing..

On June 18, 2020, NVIG representatives attended an online town hall meeting organized by the Intercounty Fellowship of Alcoholic Anonymous Serving San Francisco and Marin (AASFMarin) to address returning to in-person meetings. The meeting was held prior to the June 2020 spike in coronavirus cases and the subsequent Statewide Orders requiring the closures of various business operations and private gatherings. The rapidly changing dynamics certainly means that the decision-making process for reopening meetings in Napa County will be delayed for some time, but Intergroup believes the subject matter is still very relevant to groups as they plan for the future. While there are no 'musts' in the A.A. program, we do need to abide by the Traditions, and an informed group conscience is suggested as part of the process.

AASFMarin currently lists all meetings as online only. The meeting materials from the town hall are posted as part of the minutes of that meeting, as informational resources, but the policies and practices have not been formally adopted by that group. A link to all materials can be found here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yzE2PRpcuLaj7nGyFNO_zfj_M4LCPnuPU6YjaS5a6eU/edit?usp=sharing.

In general, the safety precautions discussed at the AASFMarin workshop center around social distancing, sanitation, and communication of safety protocols. Sometime in the future, contact tracing could be a requirement and a vaccine could be made available. It would be of value to consider all these things when making an informed group conscience. The following suggested practices were compiled with input from several other intergroups and central offices across the country to determine best practices to protect A.A. members going forward.

What You Will Find in This Document:

- [Getting Started](#)
- [Suggested Topics for Discussion as You Plan for Reopening](#)
- [What to Do if an AA Member Tests Positive for COVID-19 and Attended Your Meeting](#)
- [Consider New or Revised Service Opportunities](#)
- [Our Traditions](#)
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CONSIDERATIONS FOR RESUMING IN-PERSON MEETINGS

Getting Started

It is suggested that each group be prepared in advance for reopening, including having a safety plan to submit to the host and to include in your meeting materials. As each phase of the reopening goes into effect it may be necessary to speak to the host facility and adjust your groups' responsibilities and precautions accordingly. Gathering a group conscience on moving forward may require some back and forth with the host facility as you learn additional information and make decisions.

- Have you initiated contact with your host to determine:
 - If/when the host facility will allow/be ready for meetings to return?
 - Are you prepared to consider other options if the group will not be able to return to the space?

- If capacity is limited, who gets to attend? First-come-first-seated? Lottery? Saving seats?
- How will material be handled that multiple people come into contact with?
- Will storage or refreshments be allowed?
- Will contact tracing be required? How will that work?
- Are there host-specific procedures to include?
- Does your group have established safety procedures (sanitizing, social distancing, masks, etc.)?
- Will your group be responsible for sanitizing surfaces or will it be handled by the host facility?
- Who will provide the sanitization supplies?
- [Are your Trusted Servants familiar with State and Local Public Health Orders and Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) guidelines](#)

“The law of the land does not stop at the door of AA.”

- Do a walk-through to create a checklist of safety procedures

Suggested Topics for Discussion as You Plan for Reopening

- **Meeting Procedures**
 - Safety Protocols if someone comes to the meeting and is sick:
 - Encourage sick individuals to stay home to protect the well-being of other attendees, their families, the meeting space, etc.
 - Provide them with phone numbers, remote meeting info, and other resources in a plastic baggie to take home with them
 - Inform the group members that they may have been exposed while maintaining confidentiality of the attendee who was sick
 - Consider collecting email addresses to alert members
 - [Consider contact tracing](#)
 - Consider signage at each public entrance of the facility that informs all meeting attendees that they should: avoid entering the facility if they have a cough or fever; maintain a minimum six-foot distance from one another; sneeze and cough into a cloth or tissue or, if not available, into one’s elbow; and not shake hands or engage in any unnecessary physical contact.
 - Consider using the Social Distancing Protocol Form

- [Consider new or revised service opportunities](#)
- Meeting scripts can be adjusted to include:
 - Group and host facility safety guidelines - explain that these are for everyone's safety
 - How to stay connected if not able to come to in-person meetings
 - Where group members can find local [local resources and guidelines](#)
 - An explanation of [contact tracing](#) if your group decides to implement it
- Coffee / snacks:
 - Consider suspending hospitality for the time being
 - Consider having one person handle all hospitality while wearing PPE (face mask and gloves)
 - Consider a BYOB policy - "Bring your Own Beverage" or eliminating drinks entirely
- Literature:
 - Consider a BYOB policy - "Bring your own Book"
 - Change format from passing book to one person reading
 - Disinfect shared literature before / after the meeting
 - Consider alternatives to sharing copies of [Grapevine / La Viña](#) (or have at least a 72 hour quarantine period for pre-owned or donated literature)
- Newcomers:
 - Pre-printed sheet of group members and phone numbers
 - Offer Newcomer packets with phone numbers, pamphlets, and other resources in a sealed plastic baggie
- Anniversaries:
 - Consider how to handle chips, etc., potentially with a no-contact solution
- Finances:
 - Will the group be able to afford rent with lower attendance due to distancing protocols?
 - Some of the items that the group discusses and determines to be requirements for reopening may incur new expenses:
 - Cleaning products / hand sanitizer

- Technology for Hybrid Meetings
 - Ensure the group members and treasurer are informed of these new group expenses.
 - Accessibility:
 - Virtual option to increase accessibility
 - Are small in-person meetings for homebound individuals a safe possibility?
- **Meeting Delivery Format and Requirements**
 - Discuss whether your meeting will continue as an online meeting, have a hybrid meeting, or meet in person only
 - Consider costs and availability of technology, wifi, tech knowledge, etc.
 - Consider whether the group will purchase their own account / technology or use a group member's.
 - Consider the anonymity of those attending the in-person meeting
 - Do we/how will we get consent from those in attendance?
 - How will we capture audio from the whole room, or will we only have certain things on-mic like Secretary and Speaker (if any)? Will we have a standing or handheld mic?
 - Will we have video, and if so, capturing what? Secretary, Speaker, whole room?
 - Will we have remote-participant audio played in the room? If so, how?
 - Will we have remote-participant video on a screen? If so, how?
 - Will this be affected by California laws about recording, or at least announcing remote presence, so implied consent can be exercised?
 - Consider adding service position(s), e.g. virtual meeting host(s), "spiritual bouncer" for meeting disruptions, and/or technology chair
- **7th Tradition - How to Pass the Basket:**
 - Consider having one group member carry the basket around
 - Provide gloves to the Treasurer (or whoever handles the money)
 - Consider digital options of contributing - hand out cards with digital basket info or have signage in the meeting space

- **PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)**

- Executive orders have been issued requiring everyone to wear masks or face coverings in public
- Discuss how the group will handle someone who does not wish to comply with wearing a mask
 - Consider asking them to step outside the meeting space with two homegroup members to talk and/or give them a list of phone numbers and virtual meetings
- Consider providing masks, purchased or made by group members, for free or at cost
- Consider providing hand sanitizer
- Consider providing new, sterile disposable gloves to trusted servants who handle meeting materials, 7th Tradition, etc.

- **Social Distancing**

- Maximum number of meeting attendees:
 - Check local guidelines for current information on the size of gatherings allowed
 - Check with the host facility on whether there is an overflow space available if too many people show up
 - Have two or more homegroup members go to overflow space with attendees
- Seating arranged 6 feet apart or as per local ordinance
- Greeters: in addition to wearing a mask and maintaining appropriate physical distance, no handshakes or hugs
- Consider how to end meeting with a socially distant circle
- Consider fellowshiping before / after meeting outdoors, if at all

- **Contact Tracing**

- What is it?
 - [Contact Tracing is a control measure employed as a key strategy for preventing further spread of COVID-19](#) whereby you trace and monitor everyone who has come into contact with someone who is ill, notify them of their exposure as rapidly and sensitively as possible, while protecting the sick individuals privacy and identity, and support the quarantine of contacts which helps to prevent additional transmission.

- Why should groups be concerned with contact tracing? To ensure that our common welfare comes first, groups that meet in-person are encouraged to have a contingency plan in place if a member tests positive for COVID-19. Contact tracers may be contacting the host facility and the group members no matter what, so it's important that groups be prepared ahead of time with a way to protect everyone's health and anonymity.
- Consider if / how your group will participate in contact tracing
- Contact Coordinator Responsibilities
- Consider how your group will handle confidentiality / anonymity
- Consider adding information in the meeting script to explain contact tracing

What to Do if an AA Member Tests Positive for COVID-19 and Attended Your Meeting

- Contact your local Health Department for guidance
 - Note: You **do not** have to disclose it is an AA meeting - you can simply say "community organization"
- If the group has maintained a list of attendees and their contact information for the date(s) the positive-tested person attended the meeting, notify other attendees anonymously
 - The notification can be as simple as "A person who attended the meeting on <date> has tested positive for COVID-19 and you may wish to contact your physician for additional guidance"
 - Direct attendees to the county COVID website and suggest 14-day self-isolation as recommended by CDC
- Notify the host facility
- Consider suspending face-to-face meetings for a period of time
 - Consult local or state health department or CDC guidelines
- Provide basic, anonymous information about the incident to info@aanapa.org who can then post information on the NVIG website for member awareness. Please include:
 - Group Name, Day and Time of Meeting
 - Group Location
 - Date(s) that the individual attended the meeting

Consider New or Revised Service Opportunities

- **Revised Greeter Duties:** hands out 7th Tradition card with digital contribution options, take-home meeting lists / literature / new meeting protocols / phone list

- **Contact Coordinator:** circulates and maintains list of attendees from a certain date in the event an attendee tests positive
- **Designated Seventh Tradition Basket Collector:** collects and handles money
- **Coffee server:** if group is still providing coffee, consider appointing one person to handle all coffee service
- **Sanitizer:** Wipe down contact surfaces such as chairs, tables, doorknobs, etc. prior to and immediately after the meeting
- **Revised Secretary Duties:** appoint notification duties (see above)
- **IQR / Group Contact:** if group does not have a IQR or group contact registered with Central Office, elect one (and an alternate) to stay abreast of changes / updates related to our service area (San Francisco and Marin County)
- **Technology Person:** maintain virtual component to meetings; host virtual meetings and oversee technical component; "spiritual bouncer" for meeting interruptions
- **Local and State Ordinance Keeper Upper:** Elect two members to stay current with state and local ordinances as they may relate to the group

Our Traditions

Above all, each group is asked to consider the A.A. Principles as the guiding force to a group conscience and, in particular, to pay close attention to the following Traditions:

Tradition 1 Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

- Social distancing, sanitizing, discouraging at-risk attendance, breakout meetings, dealing with ambiguity

Tradition 2 For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.

- Increase frequency of business steering meetings, "practice" meetings to see what works/doesn't

Tradition 3 The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

- This does not allow for unsafe conduct; maintain online meetings as an option

Tradition 4 Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups, or A.A. as a whole.

- Keep in mind that decisions your group makes and actions your group takes may be the only exposure a host facility or non-members have to A.A.

Tradition 5 Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

- Make sure your meeting is listed in the schedule (registered with Central Office) and that the information is accurate and up to date; consider trusted servant registration one of the responsibilities of the meeting secretary and treasurer to ensure adequate communication.

Tradition 7 Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

- Maintain and communicate what your meetings digital contribution platform is for and why

Tradition 9 A.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

- Consider your responsibility being an active participant with a voice and a vote in both Intergroup and General Service

Tradition 10 Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues, hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

- Continue discussions about COVID-19 as a safety issue in regards to how meetings are accomplished, including adherence to government controls, laws and requirements and in being good stewards of A.A.

Tradition 11 Our public relations policy is based upon attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.

- Follow Best Practices for maintaining anonymity in online meetings

Tradition 12 Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

- Strive to ensure Zoom meetings, if continued, are protected from non-AA exposure.
- Open questions
 - How do we maintain the anonymity and privacy of people who are in AA and have Covid-19 so members do not feel ostracized or picked-on or exposed?
 - How does “principles above personalities” come into play with this new time and shock (testing of) to our Traditions?
 - How do we use the language of the principles (honesty, hope, surrender, courage, willingness, love, responsibility, discipline, awareness, service) to convey any new physical meeting parameters?

Source

- Intercounty Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous Serving San Francisco and Marin, June 18, 2020 Town Hall, [Meeting Resources](#)

Resources

- [Napa County Public Health](#)

- Center for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>
 - Contact Tracing - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/open-america/contact-tracing.html>
- General Service Office (GSO): COVID Guidance https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/update-on-covid-19-coronavirus
- Best Practices for a Digital Seventh Tradition: <https://aasfmarin.org/online-contributions-your-digital-7th-tradition-guide-to-best-practices>
- Practicing the Seventh Tradition in a Virtual Environment: https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/SMF-223-FAQonVirtualBasket_en.pdf
- California Department of Public Health: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Guidance-for-Face-Coverings_06-18-2020.pdf?referringSource=articleShare
- General Service Office (GSO): Safety in AA https://www.aa.org/assets/en_us/smf-209_en.pdf
- General Service Office (GSO): Safety Card https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/f-211_SafetyCardforAAGroups.pdf