

AL-ANON guidelines

The Shared Experience Of Al-Anon and Alateen Members.

Guideline for Al-Anon Web Sites

G-40

The Internet is an economical communication media that many of the Al-Anon Family Groups' links of service use to reach potential newcomers, professionals, the media, and the general public. Considerably more people affected by another's alcoholism can be reached through Web sites than by most other means. Because of their far reaching impact on Al-Anon it is essential that members are knowledgeable about and apply Al-Anon principles when creating Al-Anon Web sites.

GETTING STARTED

Al-Anon/Alateen Web sites are developed to meet the needs of Al-Anon service arms, including Districts, Areas, Al-Anon Information Services (also known as Intergroups), and Literature Distribution Centers (LDCs). Individual groups occasionally want to establish Web sites, but are encouraged to work within their district or Al-Anon Information Service to offer local Al-Anon and Alateen information.

It is suggested that the development of an Al-Anon Web site include ample planning time. Experience has shown that the best results are accomplished when a committee does the planning. The committee can be an existing board of the service arm, another service committee, or it can be a new committee formed just for planning and updating of the Web site. Having a committee member who is knowledgeable of Web technology is helpful.

Once the committee is chosen, the next step is reviewing existing Al-Anon Web sites. Districts and Al-Anon Information Services could collaborate with the Area to add a page with local information if the Area has a site already. Areas creating Web sites might collaborate with the existing Al-Anon Information Service and District sites to serve the entire Area.

PLANNING FOR A WEB SITE

Critical elements in planning are determining the site's purpose and audience. Some things to consider:

- Is the site to be a public outreach tool, with the main purpose to attract newcomers and help them find a meeting?
- Is it a communication tool for providing current information to Al-Anon and Alateen members?
- Will the Web site serve both of these purposes?

CONTENTS

Once you are clear on your purpose and your audience, go back and again review what information is already available on-line. Visit the WSO site and flip through the pages. If other service arms in your Area (state/province) have sites, visit them. Think about the information your site could add to what is already available. Duplicating information that already exists on other Web sites can create confusion. Linking to other Al-Anon sites is simple and provides consistent information. The information on your Web site should be pertinent to your service arm. Key information might include:

- A warm local welcome
- Local meeting information, easy to navigate in newcomer-friendly terms
- Local contact information (Al-Anon Information Service/ Intergroup or local answering service phone numbers and e-mail addresses)
- Contact information for your local Literature Distribution Center (LDC)
- Calendar of local Al-Anon events

- Your Area, District, AIS, and/or LDC newsletters

Meeting information is probably the single most important content. Remember that the potential newcomer is not going to be familiar with terms such as "district." Therefore it is recommended that your meeting information be sorted geographically, by city or zip code.

Service arms are encouraged to write their own Web site text. There is no "Conference Approved" Web text, and it is not necessary for all sites to use the same wording. Review what is posted on other Al-Anon sites, and write text that is appropriate to welcome the visitor and that complements other sites. A list of Al-Anon service materials that may be posted without written permission is posted on the WSO Members' site (www.al-anon.alateen.org/members). The WSO does not give permission to post excerpts from Conference Approved Literature on-line.

CHOOSING A NAME

Your Web site address (URL) is something you will want to be proud of, and include on local printed materials. It should be easy to remember, and descriptive of the service arm it serves. Some tips:

- Remember your audience. Using "internal" terminology, like district/Area numbers or Al-Anon acronyms, is going to be meaningless and may confuse the potential newcomer.
- Al-Anon sites that use a geographic identifier and the full name "Al-Anon" (with the hyphen) provide an accurate description of the site. Examples would be www.indiana.al-anon.org, www.sk-al-anon.ca, or www.toronto.al-anon.org.

alateen.org. Alateen is part of Al-Anon; some service arms have chosen to follow the WSO's example and use both names. (".org" indicates a non-profit organization; this is recognized internationally. ".ca" indicates a Canadian site.)

- Once a name has been selected, the next step is to purchase/register it. There are numerous companies that handle this, and the cost is usually nominal.

PAYING FOR THE SITE

There are costs involved in both the initial establishment and maintenance of a Web site. In keeping with the Seventh Tradition, Al-Anon service arms that create Web sites pay the expenses associated with it. There are community organizations that offer free Web space; however, it is preferable to pay for Web space rather than risk the appearance of affiliation.

SETTING UP THE SITE

Once the group is comfortable with the proposed content, someone will need to actually build the site and post the contents. Again, if a member of the committee has the expertise, this is ideal. If not, the group can seek a member volunteer, or contract with a Web design company. It is very important from the outset that the designer understand that the committee will make the decisions on content and future changes to the site.

Check and double check for spelling and grammar before posting. Be sure to spell **Al-Anon** and **Alateen** correctly. It is usually best if two or three members proof-read prior to posting. Keep your postings short and to the point. Use fonts that are easy to read. Graphics and colors should be chosen carefully to enhance the attractiveness of the site without distracting from the message.

Discuss all elements of content and design in light of the Twelve Traditions. It is essential that the Web site does not appear to endorse any outside enterprise (Tradition Six) and does not accept outside donations of art, text, or design work (Tradition Seven). When in doubt, DON'T POST. Check with the WSO or your Area Delegate before posting something you are not sure about.

If your Web site includes a calendar section, be sure to follow your area's Alateen requirements regarding posting of Alateen event information. **Alateen names, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers should never be posted as contacts.**

Having a Site Map provides an easy way for members and newcomers to navigate your Web site. A site map is a textual or visual index of your Web site's contents.

UPDATING THE CONTENTS

Develop a regular process for updating information on the Web site. For safety reasons and goodwill it is essential that meeting information is updated frequently. Nothing is more discouraging to a newcomer than finding out a meeting no longer exists.

LINKING TO OTHER SITES

Linking to sites other than Al-Anon is not recommended, as we endeavor at all times to avoid the

appearance of affiliation. However, it is very appropriate to link to other Al-Anon sites. It is recommended that an Area site link to any district or AIS site within its boundaries, and vice versa, and that all Al-Anon sites link to the World Service Office Public Outreach site, www.al-anon.alateen.org.

All links from service arm sites should have a disclaimer posted, stating that the visitor is leaving the site, and that the Al-Anon site is not responsible for the contents of the linked sites.

The WSO links to Area Al-Anon sites, with the expectation that from there, the visitor can find meeting information and/or links to the district or Al-Anon Information Service sites within that state or province. When Al-Anon participates in a special event, such as the AA International Convention, the WSO will post a link to the appropriate information.

SAFETY AND ANONYMITY

The Eleventh Tradition states that members should "...always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV." The Internet is considered a form of media, just as TV, radio, and films are, and members should not be identified by full name or pictured on the Web. Pages 73-74 and 91 in the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* address anonymity in all forms of media.

Remember anyone can find your Web site. Review all documents thoroughly before posting. Never post full names and/or addresses. Be sure you have permission from a member before posting a contact phone number, first name, or personal sharings. Archived editions of Area or district newsletters should have last names removed. Full names should not be used as e-mail addresses in publications or on Web sites. Some areas use an e-mail address system that includes the service position plus the member's first name and last initial. For safety reasons, never post identifying Alateen information. Be safe and follow the Traditions—never break anyone's anonymity!

HOW TO CONTACT

Your Web site should provide a way to contact the Web master or another trusted servant if someone has a question or concern. Visitors should be encouraged to let you know if they are having problems navigating the site, if information is inaccurate, etc. Please do not post the WSO e-mail address for this purpose!

ELECTRONIC MEETING WEB SITES

Some electronic Al-Anon meetings have their own Web site, or may meet on an outside site. Only electronic meetings registered at the WSO may use the Al-Anon Family Groups name and logo on a Web site. See the *Guideline for Electronic Meetings* (G-39).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

FAQ for Al-Anon Web Sites (S-66)

Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P24/27)*

*Available on-line at www.al-anon.alateen.org/members