



September 26, 2013

To: Area 16 Corrections Committee Members & A.A. Corrections Volunteers

From: Jim T., Area 16 Chairperson for Corrections
Tim E., Area 16 Co-Chair for Corrections

Subject: Guidelines for Correctional Facility Twelfth Step Work

At the September 2013 Georgia State Service Assembly Corrections Workshops, a great deal of discussion centered around what is appropriate for AA Corrections Volunteers in a Correctional Facility setting, and what is not. After speaking with our current Delegate, Tom H. (Panel 62), it was decided that it would be helpful to assemble Guidelines both from A.A. collective experience from the General Service Office and from the Georgia Department of Corrections Volunteer Handbook. We, as the Area 16 Corrections Committee, hope that you will find the following information helpful in your Correctional Facility Twelfth Step Work.

In the G.S.O. flyer (F-2), Information on Alcoholics Anonymous, the following items are listed under the section called "*What A.A. Does Not Do*".

A.A. does not:

1. Furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover
2. Solicit members
3. Engage in or sponsor research
4. Keep attendance records or case histories
5. Join "councils" of social agencies
6. Follow up or try to control its members
7. Make medical or psychological diagnoses or prognoses
8. Provide detox or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, or any medical or psychiatric treatment
9. Offer religious services or host/sponsor retreats
10. Engage in education about alcohol
11. Provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or any other welfare or social services
12. Provide domestic or vocational counseling
13. Accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-A.A. sources
14. Provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials, social agencies, employers, etc.

The Georgia Department of Corrections Volunteer Handbook, in the Rules for Volunteers section, states the following:

1. Only bring into the facility with you, the materials you need for your service, your drivers license and vehicle keys.
2. Report to the Front Control Desk and sign in for your scheduled service. Then report to your designated area, and upon completion of your service, report back to the Front Control to sign out.
3. Volunteers must avoid physical contact with the inmates other than a handshake.
4. Volunteers must dress modestly. No shorts, no tank tops, no sleeveless shirts/tops, no open toed shoes, no tight fitting clothes, no see through clothes, no low cut tops/dresses that show cleavage. If a female wears a dress, the dress cannot be more than one inch above the knee.
5. Volunteers must not bring tape recorders, cameras or cell phones into the facility. Only materials essential to your program are allowed.
6. Volunteers must not bring anything to nor receive anything from a detainee. Materials used in the volunteer's program must be approved in advance by the warden. This may include pamphlets, brochures, books, musical equipment, etc.
7. Volunteers are not to talk to inmates about other inmates in their program. Volunteers are not to discuss female inmates with male inmates or male inmates with female inmates.
8. Volunteers are not to give their home address or telephone number to any inmate. Volunteers are not to accept collect calls from inmates if they manage to gain access to your phone number.
9. Volunteers must not make outside contact (letters, phone calls, visits, etc.) in regard to or for the inmate, including families, lawyers, judges, or other officials.
10. Volunteers must not take gifts or favors from inmates or their friends or families or give gifts or favors from inmates to anyone outside the facility.
11. Volunteers must not reveal the identity of inmates to anyone outside the facility.
12. Volunteers must not criticize staff or the facility in the presence of inmates. Any comments or concerns you have should be addressed to the warden.
13. Volunteers cannot be on an inmate's visitation list for any reason.

14. Be on time when you are expected and call in advance when you will be unable to attend.

15. If you are not sure of any question/request, the safe answer is NO.

It is important to remember the primary purpose of A.A. is to carry its message of recovery to the alcoholic seeking help. We are not prison reformers and do not wish to engage in any controversy. We are in these facilities for one reason only. In many cases, we are the first contact that inmates and staff may have with Alcoholics Anonymous, and it is incumbent on us to carry ourselves accordingly.

Those of us who are fortunate enough to carry the A.A. message behind the walls are, by our very nature, caring people. It is very easy to become over-involved with the inmates and we must take extra care to ensure this does not happen. Any type of violation, no matter what the intent, can be the basis for the volunteer to be permanently banned from a facility. Even worse, sometimes this may extend to A.A. as a whole. A good rule of thumb is to never do anything for an inmate that you would not be willing to do for all of the inmates – or what a Correctional Officer would do for an inmate. Just remember that in Georgia, we are considered to be extensions of their staff.

At some point, each of us had to accept personal responsibility for our own sobriety. We each had to start making decisions and taking actions that placed our sobriety as our number one priority. The same is true for the inmates who attend our meetings inside the guard line. We feel it is important for us, as A.A. volunteers, to allow them to take the actions while incarcerated, that are necessary to aid sobriety upon their release. This includes working with their counselors and chaplains to find safe places to live, employment, and other activities after their release. If we do not allow them to do this for themselves, we may very well rob them of that experience.

Over the past two years, the Area 16 Corrections Committee has focused on improving communications with the Georgia Department of Corrections. In particular, we now enjoy an extremely good relationship with the Director of Reentry Services, Ms. Stacy Rivera. Not only does Stacy oversee the Chaplains (who are in charge of all GDC volunteers), but also finding new ways to help the inmate population upon release. Much of our discussion at the Saturday night workshop centered on this topic. If any of our volunteers are aware of resources available for their inmates in local areas, we would be very interested in having that information. As you know, A.A. is in a unique position, on a statewide basis, to enjoy a network of individuals who gather together to exchange information three times a year at our Assemblies. We, as the Area 16 Corrections Committee, would be happy to pass any information along to Reentry Services in Forsyth to aid them in their efforts to reduce recidivism. This will allow you, as an A.A. volunteer, to focus exclusively on carrying our message of recovery. As Bill Wilson says on page 150 of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, “Shoemaker, stick to thy last...better do one thing supremely well than many badly”.

We are hopeful that these thoughts and guidelines will be helpful as you continue to perform this very important form of Twelfth Step Work. We are here to aid you in those efforts, and are always open to your comments, questions, and suggestions. We are very grateful for all of your efforts to carry the A.A. message of recovery into correctional facilities.