

AREA 75

CONFERENCE

GUIDELINES

Adopted by Assembly Action On
March 3, 2002

These guidelines are a compilation of the collective conference experience in Southern Wisconsin (Area 75) – what has worked and what has not. This experience will prove useful in bidding, planning and hosting an Area conference. The goal of these guidelines is to make the job of the conference committee easier.

SECTION I. BIDDING THE CONFERENCE

GENERAL INFORMATION

- The Spring Conference is held in May and the Fall Conference in October or November. Each conference is an ***AREA 75 FUNCTION***.
- Consideration must be given to the dates of any regional functions and the General Service Conference. The Area Delegate should be consulted regarding these dates.
- Conferences cannot be held on holiday weekends (e.g. Mother's Day and Memorial Day).
- The General Service Office suggests that no conference be held within six weeks (before or after) an A.A. International Convention.
- One person from the hosting district should be selected to gather bidding information.
- The first duty of the person selected is to contact the Area Conference Advisory Chairperson for direction in proceeding through the bidding process.
- Two or more districts may jointly host a conference.
- If you are unsuccessful in your first bid for a conference, keep trying. Many districts receive a subsequent bid.

THE FACILITY

Minimum Requirements

- ❑ Assembly Meeting room – 200 people
- ❑ Two rooms for AA panels – 100 people
- ❑ Two rooms for Al-Anon panels – 100 people
- ❑ Meeting rooms for Standing Committees – 50 people
- ❑ Banquet/Breakfast facilities – 400 people
- ❑ Space for registration tables
- ❑ Locked room for literature sales
- ❑ Locked Archives/Literature/Grapevine display area(s)
- ❑ Locked room for taping equipment
- ❑ Hospitality/Coffee area

NOTE:

- 1) Some rooms may serve more than one purpose; e.g., the assembly room may also serve as the banquet/breakfast room, or two standing committees may meet together.
- 2) It is preferable that all display and meeting rooms be located in the same general area of the facility.

Additional Information

- ❑ Two to three years' lead-time is generally needed to book a facility.
- ❑ The facility does not need to be in the hosting district.
- ❑ Area 75 assembly action allows conferences to be bid three years in advance.
- ❑ Public buildings are not recommended for insurance reasons.
- ❑ A member of the Area Conference Advisory Committee **must** be consulted before selecting a site.
- ❑ It is best if only one or two people serve as contacts for the facility to avoid conflicting information and decisions.
- ❑ Written references from past conference facilities are available. These may be useful in dissuading the facility from requiring a deposit. If a deposit is required, that information must be provided to the Area for approval when the bid is presented.

THE CONTRACT

- ❑ **NO** contract or other binding document may be signed during the bidding process.
- ❑ The contract should refer to our organization as "The Southern Wisconsin Area 75 Assembly" (not Alcoholics Anonymous).
- ❑ Be sure to inform the facility that our organization is non-profit and sales tax exempt. A copy of the Certificate of Exempt Status is available from the Area Treasurer or Conference Advisory Committee Chair.
- ❑ Request that a reservation code (such as WAA) be noted in the contract, and include this code on the registration flyer. This will help insure that the conference receives proper credit for all rooms booked by attendees.

SECTION II. PLANNING THE CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Conference Chairperson, Co-Chairperson, Treasurer, Co-Treasurer & Secretary -

- Four to five years (a reasonable period) of continuous sobriety is recommended for the Chairperson.
- Two to four years of continuous sobriety is recommended for the Co-Chair and Treasurer and Co-Treasurer positions.
- One year of continuous sobriety is recommended for the Secretary.

- Previous conference experience is very beneficial.

Subcommittees –

- Registration
 - Program
 - Greeting
 - Hospitality
 - Printing/Publicity
 - Entertainment
 - Decorations
 - Alkathon
 - Al-Anon & Alateen
- A minimum of one year of continuous sobriety is recommended for the above subcommittee chairpersons.
 - The individual subcommittees should be kept to ten people or less, excluding conference weekend volunteers. Co-chairs are suggested.
 - Two positions/subcommittees may be combined; e.g., Decorations & Entertainment or Greeting & Hospitality or Treasurer & Registration.
 - Specific duties are outlined in Section III.

⇒ It is best if only one or two people serve as contacts for the facility to avoid conflicting information and decisions.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Upon approval of the Conference Advisor and subsequent to finalization of the facility contract, the Area 75 Treasurer will provide seed money to cover the conference start-up expenses.
 - Area 75 has both a Federal ID number and a Wisconsin sales tax exempt number for conference use.
 - **NO** contract, letter of understanding or other binding document can be signed until approved by two (2) Area Conference Advisory Committee members.
 - If the facility requires a deposit, that information must be provided to the Area for approval when the bid is presented.
- NOTE: References from past conference facilities are available upon request from the Conference Advisory Chairperson. These references are a valuable negotiating tool and may be accepted by the facility in lieu of a deposit.
- It is the responsibility of the Conference Committee to pay the expenses of the main AA, Al-Anon and Alateen speakers and one guest each, as well as the Delegate and guest and the Regional Trustee and guest. These expenses include travel, registration, one hotel room and any meals submitted for reimbursement.

⇒ It is a matter of Area assembly action that the Regional Trustee be invited to all Area conferences. The invitation should be coordinated through the current Delegate.

- ❑ It is the responsibility of the Conference Committee to pay the hotel room expense for the Conference Treasurer.
- ❑ The registration fee for the conference includes everything except meals and accommodations.
- ❑ **Only the Conference Treasurer or Co-Treasurer is authorized to handle conference funds.**

PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

- ❑ All main speakers (Friday night, Saturday night and Sunday morning) must be members of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- ❑ When selecting main speakers, it is advisable that the committee listens to a tape or has previously heard the speaker. This reduces the chance of inviting a speaker who will use offensive language. The tapes are an excellent resource for speaker recommendations/tapes.
- ❑ Consideration should be given to arranging for Alternate main speakers (in the event of illness or other unforeseen problems).
- ❑ An effort should be made to contact all DCMs in the Area to help find panelists. Panel members should not all be from the host District. However, it is advisable to have a list of local members willing to cover last minute cancellations and “no shows”.
- ❑ The anonymity statement should be read prior to each panel and speaker meeting.
- ❑ Each meeting chairperson and panel emcee should be provided with the anonymity statement and a checklist of instructions – including suggested format, announcements, information on taping, etc.

PROMOTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ❑ To attract people from outside the Area, notices regarding the conference should be sent to:
 - Grapevine Editorial Dept.
 - 475 Riverside Drive – Room 1040
 - New York, NY 10115
 - Fax: 212-870-3301
 - E-mail: gveditorial@aagrapevine.org

The deadline for submitting information is the last day of the fourth month prior to the conference month (e.g., January 31 deadline for a May conference for publication in the April issue). Include a full and exact mailing address.

Box 4-5-9

PO Box 459

Grand Central Station

New York, NY 10163

Information must be received at G.S.O. three months prior to the conference.

Each *Box 4-5-9* includes the form requested by G.S.O. for submission of the information.

- An announcement should be placed in all newsletters in the Area and all Central Offices/Intergroups should have a plentiful supply of registration forms. The addresses of the Central Offices are available from the Area Secretary.
- PROMOTE THE CONFERENCE throughout the Area. Visit other districts; contact DCMs and groups. Be enthusiastic!

The success of the conference is directly proportional to the effort put into promoting it.

SECTION III. CONFERENCE COMMITTEE DUTIES

Chairperson / Co-Chairperson

- Selects members for conference committee positions and subcommittee chairs
- Selects conference theme and writes statement of purpose with committee input
- Schedules conference committee meetings (time and place) and prepares meeting agendas
NOTE: Have meetings regularly but not so often it is a burden for committee members.
- Invites Al-Anon and Alateen participation
- Keeps close check on all phases of planning and progress
- Maintains close contact with facility/catering
- Cooperates with facility management in designating smoking areas
- Arranges room reservations for Delegate, Trustee, speakers and Conference Treasurer
- Ensures selection of taping people and central office for sale of literature
- Contacts Area standing committee chairpersons regarding displays and meeting space/time
- Arranges for signers and interpreters for the Area Assembly, Saturday night speaker and Sunday morning speaker, upon 30 day advance request
NOTE: Be sure to provide appropriate seating for signers and interpreters and the attendees using those services.
- Maintains communication with host district DCM and requests “Bill W donations” from groups to cover registration fees for members in need of financial assistance.
- Reports to the Area on conference progress at pre-conference assemblies
- Schedules final wrap-up meeting after conference

Secretary

- o Maintains Conference committee roster (names, addresses, phone numbers, email etc)
- o Records meeting minutes and attendance
- o Forwards copies of minutes to all committee members, the conference advisor, the host district DCM, the Conference Advisory Chairperson and the Area 75 chairperson, no later than one week prior to the next scheduled meeting
- o Handles all conference correspondence, including notes of appreciation
- o Sends conference information to the newsletters, the Grapevine and Box 4-5-9 for publication

Treasurer / Co-Treasurer

- o Opens conference P.O. Box with two authorized signers
- o Opens conference checking account with three authorized signers (Chairperson, Secretary & Treasurer); the opening deposit will be the seed money from Area 75
- o Prepares Conference budget (a break-even scenario is suggested)
NOTE: Refer to previous conference budgets for guidance.
- o Picks up mail
- o Makes deposits and writes checks for all conference expenses
- o Balances checking account bank statement monthly
- o Transfers registration forms to Registration chairperson if applicable
- o Provides cash box(es) and petty cash for registration table
- o Coordinates regular money pick-up with Registration Chair during registration hours
- o Returns seed money to the Area Treasury, along with any additional proceeds from the Conference
- o Prepares financial statement and final report for the Area within 60 days of conference

Registration Chairperson

- o Verifies registration forms received from Treasurer
- o Maintains record of registrations and meals
- o Develops name tag/envelope system for use at the registration table
- o Arranges for volunteers at the registration table and provides schedule with assigned time slots
- o Sets up procedure for receiving attendees at the registration table
NOTE: Everyone attending should register (unless they come only for the Area Assembly or an open meeting)

⇒ See Section IV – Volunteers/Registration Tips

Program Chairperson

- o Plans program format in consultation with the full Conference Committee
- o Arranges for main speakers, emcees and panel members
NOTE: Panels usually consist of a chairperson and 3 speakers. Careful selection and good communication is important.
- o Selects panel topics that relate to the conference theme
- o Forwards pertinent information to participants at least two weeks before the conference
- o Arranges for speaker transportation if necessary
- o Provides detailed information to Printing Chairperson at least one month in advance of the conference date
- o Arranges program schedule to accommodate Area service committee meetings and the Al-Anon and Alateen speakers on Saturday afternoon

- o Schedules Al-Anon speaker opposite no other activities

Printing & Publicity Chairperson

- o Plans layout of flyers, registration forms, posters and program
- o Determines exact quantity of flyers and programs needed in consultation with the Conference Committee

NOTE: Quantity 5000-7500 flyers and 750-1000 programs are the recommended minimums.

NOTE: Registration forms must be available at, but not prior to, the conference immediately prior to the one being planned.

- o Provides comparison pricing and lead time on printing; places orders pursuant to full committee recommendation
- o Provides informational posters for use throughout the conference site

Greeters Chairperson

- o Arranges for volunteers and provides assigned time slots
- o Selects greeter locations throughout conference site
- o Arranges for badges for volunteers
- o Facilitates training session and tour of facility for volunteers

⇒ **See Section IV – Volunteers**

Entertainment/Decorations

- o Arranges for banners, table decorations etc. as needed
- o Makes arrangements for dance (usually following Saturday night speaker)
- o Purchases gifts for main speakers

Hospitality Chairperson

- o Determines hospitality room/area set-up
- o Arranges for supplies (coffee, snacks, cups etc.) and donation cans
- o Arranges for volunteers and provides assigned time slots
- o NOTE: The hospitality area should be set up no later than 4:00 Friday afternoon
- o Facilitates training session for volunteers
- o Ensures that the hospitality area is kept neat and clean throughout the conference
- o Ensures the area is cleaned up at the end of the conference

Al-Anon/Alateen Chairperson

- o Arranges for Al-Anon/Alateen speakers and panel members
- o Selects Al-Anon panel topics
- o Provides pertinent information to Printing Chairperson as needed

Alkathon Chairperson

- o Determines hours of Alkathon with consideration of full conference program
- o Schedules volunteers to chair meetings
- o Selects meeting topics in consultation with the Conference Committee

SECTION IV. HOSTING THE CONFERENCE

AS THE CONFERENCE TIME APPROACHES.....

- Many committee members, especially those new at planning conferences, will become highly anxious. Reassurances from the more experienced committee members and the conference advisor are helpful at this time.

- A comprehensive conference review with the facility manager must be arranged the last week before the conference. Items to cover should include, but not be limited to, room set-up, meal menus/times, facility provided equipment/tables, and smoking area designation.

HOURS

- Registration hours should be stated in the program
- No matter what start time is indicated, people will begin to arrive around noon on Friday. It is good to have greeters available and the hospitality room set up by noon if possible.

VOLUNTEERS

- Keep volunteer shifts to two hours maximum
- Send people a copy of the schedule with their time slot highlighted
- Arrange a facility tour/training session
- Remind people of their commitment by phone and/or mail
- Ask them to arrive 10-15 minutes early for their shift to facilitate a smooth transition and to observe procedure
- Supervise volunteers well; be available to them
- Thank them for their service

REGISTRATION TIPS

- Pre-registrations –
 - ✓ Maintain master list of registrations with all pertinent information
 - ✓ Make envelope for each person, marked with name, city, AA/Al-Anon, meal purchase; place pre-printed name tag inside with meal designation(s)
 - ✓ Place envelopes in an alphabetic file
 - ✓ Keep all original registration forms in alphabetic file
 - ✓ Prepare name tags for conference speakers/guests
- Registration Table -
 - ✓ Make sure all pre-registration lists are up-to-date

- ✓ Get cash box and petty cash from Treasurer
- ✓ Separate the area into a pre-registered section and an unregistered section with adequate signage
- ✓ Set up an adequate number of volunteer stations to avoid congestion
- ✓ Have adequate supplies available, including –
 - Conference programs
 - Pens
 - Blank name tags
 - Walk-in registration sheets (name, city, AA/Al-Anon, meal sale)

⇒ **Name tags must be worn by all conference attendees**

⇒ **Everyone attending should register (unless they come only for the Area Assembly or an open meeting)**

COFFEE SALES/ICE CREAM SOCIALS

- Based on previous conference experience, it is advised that coffee sales be the responsibility of the facility, except in the hospitality room (if permitted by facility regulations).
- Donations of coffee and supplies for the hospitality area should be solicited from the districts/groups.
- Ice cream socials are popular, but should also be left to the facility to manage.

SECTION V. THE WRAP-UP

- ❖ The conference chairperson will schedule a meeting immediately following the conference, while problems/suggestions/successes are fresh in committee members' minds. Candidates for the Conference Advisory Committee should be selected at this meeting.
- ❖ A final committee meeting may be scheduled to review the financial report completed by the Treasurer, and to provide input for the conference report required for the next Area 75 meeting. Two copies of the final report should be provided.
- ❖ Any monies remaining (after payment of all conference expenses) are paid to the Area 75 Treasurer no later than 60 days following the conference.
- ❖ *Conferences will provide the Area Conference Advisory Committee chair with two copies of a conference summary report to include the hotel contract, flyer, program, committee summaries, a detailed financial report, budgets, and attendance and banquet/breakfast numbers. The Conference Advisory Committee chair will give the original to the Area Archives and keep a copy for committee usage. (2003/09/14)*

**These guidelines are available for download from the
Area 75 website (www.area75.org).**

**These guidelines have very generally covered the aspects of
conference planning. There is a wealth of conference
experience in Area 75.**

**Answers to all questions not covered by this document are
available from your Conference Advisory Committee.**

CONFERENCE BIDS

Bid Spring/Fall/Year _____

Host District (County): _____

DCM Presenting Bid: _____

SITE LOCATION

Name of Hotel _____

Hotel Room Rates: \$ _____ Single \$ _____ Double

\$ _____ Triple \$ _____ Quad

Banquet for 500? _____ Rooms for Panels # _____

Deposit Requirement? _____ Facility Occupancy _____

Handicap Accessible? _____ Available Dates _____

Alternate Site _____

Other Motels in the Area _____

Other Comments _____
