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# HOSPITALS AND INSTITUTIONS

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## ADULT CHILDREN IN HOSPITALS AND INSTITUTIONS (H&I)

The disease of family dysfunction is a progressive disease that forces some adult children to seek help in a treatment setting or psychiatric hospital. Other adult children are sentenced to prison for crimes they have committed while acting out with addiction or codependency. These adult children often form an ACA meeting in their facility and ask for outside support.

Hospitals and Institutions meetings are ACA meetings held in a treatment center, jail, prison or other facility that houses adult children. While there is ACA involvement, there is no affiliation between ACA and the facility. Many members carry the ACA message into these facilities as part of their service work and personal program of recovery. At the same time, many ACA members began their program in one of these facilities.

ACA members from the outside attend the meetings, carrying the message to the adult child wherever and whenever they are asked. Adult children in these facilities are grateful for the outside support. Many attend ACA meetings once they are released. They become group members, carrying the message of hope that was carried to them.

## WHY ARE H&I MEETINGS NECESSARY?

The purpose of an ACA H&I meeting is to carry the message of ACA recovery to adult children who, by virtue of their presence in a hospital, institution, or prison, cannot attend other ACA meetings.

## WHAT QUALIFIES AS AN H&I MEETING?

The following qualities are shared by all ACA H&I Meetings:

- The meeting is not an ACA group, but a service provided by an area's local H&I meeting or Intergroup.
- The meeting takes place in facilities where adult children do not have access to other ACA meetings.
- Due to the institution's rules, the meeting must be closed to outside participation by ACA members other than the ACA meeting leaders or chairpersons.

## WHAT AN H&I MEETING IS NOT

- An H&I meeting is NOT fully self-supporting and free of restrictions.
- An H&I meeting is NOT an open meeting.

If you are confused about whether or not a meeting qualifies as an H&I meeting, please contact your H&I subcommittee, Intergroup, or ACA WSO.

## PRIMARY PURPOSE

Bringing the ACA message to hospitals and institutions requires that we:

- Carry a clear ACA message on the ACA steps, meeting attendance, sponsorship, and emotional sobriety.
- Make meeting information available and accessible.

## H&I MEETING RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that ACA members carrying the message into one of these facilities have a clear understanding of the ACA program. The suggestions for how to share or talk in an ACA meeting apply here as well. We identify as an adult child and explain our recovery and the ACA program with clarity and honesty. Please read the ACA Fellowship Text segment on sharing in an ACA meeting (*Big Red Book*, pp. 614-615).

We also abide by all facility rules and guidelines. We do not fraternize with or become romantically involved with or sponsor adult children in these settings. We are there to carry the ACA message of recovery.

## HOW TO START AN H&I MEETING

Hospitals and Institutions meetings are usually coordinated by an ACA group or Intergroup. At the group level, ACA members ask for volunteers to attend or help form an H&I meeting. ACA members attending an H&I meeting should be working an ACA program by attending meetings, remaining abstinent, and showing emotional sobriety.

## HERE'S A MUCH NEEDED SERVICE OPPORTUNITY FOR SOMEONE!

We now have the guidelines for the "Correspondence Outreach to Institutions" (COI). These guidelines help ACA members to safely connect with incarcerated ACA members for the purpose of sponsorship, or, to act as a Fellow Traveler or as a "penpal". If you are interested, please contact: [hichair@acawso.org](mailto:hichair@acawso.org)

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## AN EMPHASIS ON SAFETY

- Be aware and adhere to the facility's rules and regulations as they relate to your interaction with prospective members.
- Some facilities will require that a facility staff person be present at each meeting. You may also request that a staff member be present. Either way, be sure you have a designated facility contact to assist you with your meeting needs should any issues arise.
- For your own safety, do not attend H&I facility meetings alone. ACA meetings within H&I facilities should be attended by two ACA service members.
- Do not bring messages, correspondence or letters in or out of the facility.
- Avoid wearing flashy jewelry or bringing excessive cash into a facility.
- Never give money or gifts to any facility member, and refrain from accepting gifts from members – express your thanks in words.
- Do not give anyone within the facility your address or telephone number or that of another member.
- Do not talk about employment or living arrangements.
- Take special care in understanding and adhering to any regulations and restrictions the facility may have regarding adolescent members of the facility.
- Do not provide transportation, jobs, housing, letters of reference, or other forms of assistance to members within H&I facilities.
- We suggest you do not work with someone you could be romantically attracted to.

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## WHEN A HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION MAKES A REQUEST

Sometimes an institution will contact ACA World Service Organization (WSO), asking for help to start a meeting there. This is a perfect opportunity for service, and area intergroup, ACA members, or its H&I subcommittee to be instrumental in making this happen. The initial approach to starting a meeting in that facility should be made to your area intergroup or H&I subcommittee. Do not act alone – it is important for issues of both safety and unity to use a coordinated effort to bring ACA meetings inside hospitals and institutions.

Before an ACA meeting takes place, ACA members interested in H&I service work will need to go through the facility's orientation process. Each facility will have their own policy and procedures.

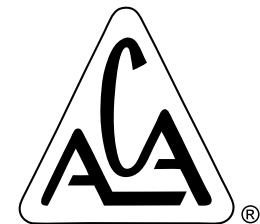
When you start your H&I meeting, depending on the facility's policy, you will be able to either bring in your own ACA literature or order literature directly from WSO, by emailing your request to: [hichair@acawso.org](mailto:hichair@acawso.org)

Local information:

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**Adult Children of Alcoholics®/  
Dysfunctional Families**

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