
SUGGESTIONS FOR HOSTING AN ACA SPONSORSHIP WORKSHOP

Many ACA groups have contacted ACA World Services wanting to know how to improve sponsorship or get more people involved in sponsorship at the group level. The Adult Children of Alcoholics Annual Business Conference has also addressed motions from groups wanting more information about effective sponsorship. This trifold complements existing ACA Conference-Approved literature on sponsorship.

ACA sponsorship begins with the individual and his or her attitude. We must understand that adult children have something to offer one another. We have lived through a dysfunctional upbringing, and we are practicing the principles of recovery. We are moving beyond mere survival to a real connection with ourselves, with others, and with a Higher Power. We can help another adult child when science, religion, and other avenues fall short. This is the great hidden fact about ACA. It is with this fact that we can build our sponsorship base and help the most people. This is what it means to be a fellow traveler.

To organize a sponsorship workshop in your area, we offer some basic suggestions. First, review the ACA trifold on sponsorship and read chapter 11 of the ACA Fellowship Text. Then, discuss with your home group or Intergroup the possibility of hosting an ACA Sponsorship Workshop. Announce a business meeting for the purpose of determining interest. At this meeting you can usually set the workshop time and date. Choose a convenient location for the workshop. You may also discuss and select a theme.

Next, identify potential workshop presenters. Contact ACA members in your area and ask if they are interested in participating. Ask them if they have a sponsor or have been sponsored. Workshop presenters should carry a clear ACA message. For obvious reasons, we avoid workshop leaders who are not actively involved in the ACA program.

Finally, prepare an agenda that outlines the events of the day, and distribute flyers announcing the workshop. You may also want to make arrangements to record the speakers.

The recorded workshop could then be used as a resource for newcomers or to help new sponsors learn about sponsoring others.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

1. Read about ACA Sponsorship.
2. Announce a business meeting to determine interest and to begin planning.
3. Choose a workshop time, date and location.
4. Decide on a workshop theme.
5. Select presenters.
6. Prepare a workshop agenda.
7. Distribute flyers announcing the event

SELECTING A WORKSHOP THEME

In addition to providing a general overview of ACA sponsorship, your workshop might also focus on

- how to use the ACA Twelve Step workbook
- the Inner Child and the Twelve Steps
- “long distance” or “group” sponsorship
- the “fellow traveler” model of sponsorship
- the principles of the Twelve Steps
- the sequence of ACA recovery

Another theme might be Step Five and how to hear a Fifth Step. Workshop participants might read Appendix B of the ACA Fellowship Text (“Hearing a Fifth Step”). Sponsors can share their experiences with listening to an ACA Fifth Step and what they do once a sponsee has completed Step Five. Many sponsors instruct a sponsee to immediately work Steps Six and Seven. Through the Fifth Step process, a sponsor can help a sponsee define character defects and begin an Eighth Step list.

SPONSORSHIP EXERCISES

Reviewing your own experience

If you have been asked to sponsor someone, keep it simple. Review how your sponsor worked the program with you. If you have not been formally sponsored, you can still sponsor others if you have worked some of the ACA Twelve Steps and have a willingness to learn. Consider these questions:

Your experience as a sponsee can be an effective guide for going forward as a sponsor. For example, if your sponsor asked that you abstain from addictive behaviors and attend meetings regularly, then you can ask a sponsee to do the same.

Setting ground rules

Many sponsors discuss expectations early. Again, review your own experiences of what worked for you as a sponsee and what didn't. Consider these questions:

- What are you willing to do as a sponsor?
- What will you expect a sponsee to do?
- How often will you talk with a sponsee by phone?
- For face-to-face meetings, when and where will you meet?
- Are there times when you will be unavailable to a sponsee?
- How will you continue to make your own ACA program a priority?

Identifying the sequence of the Steps

To be an effective ACA sponsor, you must understand the connection between the Laundry List traits and the ACA Steps, particularly Step One. The effects of family dysfunction mentioned in Step One are the Laundry List traits which include fearing authority figures, getting guilt feelings when we stand up for ourselves, and becoming an alcoholic or marrying one, or both. There are other effects of family dysfunction, but the Laundry List traits are critical in understanding and working ACA's First Step.

ACA's First Step places the focus on the effects of alcoholism and family dysfunction and how we are powerless over these effects. Step One causes us to think about how our learned survival traits from childhood disrupt our adult lives. Our lives are unmanageable if we are honest about our hidden fears and secrets. We have no real choice until we address these Laundry List traits in ACA.

The ACA adapted Steps are designed specifically to help the adult child. They are designed to address trauma and neglect in addition to addressing the addictiveness of the adult child personality. The ACA Twelve Steps address shame, abandonment, fear, and a deep sense of being flawed, while also leading the Step worker to self-worth, self-forgiveness, and a true connection to a Higher Power through the Inner Child.

After understanding the powerlessness and unmanageability in Step One, the effective ACA sponsor must know the sequence of recovery to help another person with his or her recovery process. There are different views on the sequence of recovery so we have chosen the Twelve Steps for one method. The Twelve Steps show a progressive line of recovery that begins with hitting bottom, and leads to a spiritual awakening or awareness.

For this assignment, you are being asked to list the sequence of recovery contained within the Steps. After bottoming out, the person proceeds through the Steps if willingness has been achieved. The person admits powerlessness and unmanageability in Step One and becomes open to the possibility of a Higher Power in Step Two. Beginning with Step Three, finish out the sequence of the Steps as you understand it. For help, look at each Step and ask yourself what the step is asking the person to do.

Step One – Hitting bottom and admitting powerlessness and unmanageability.

Step Two – Coming to believe. Becoming open to the presence of a Higher Power and restoration to sanity.

Step Three _____

Step Four _____

Step Five _____

Step Six _____

Step Seven _____

Step Eight _____

Step Nine _____

Step Ten _____

Step Eleven _____

Step Twelve _____

*The Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted with permission of
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