

Are We Ready to Re-Open, Saturday, May 9, 2020

Opening Comments

2:00p James H., Welcome

- Started at 2pm, started with the serenity prayer.
- Explained format of workshop, reason behind workshop (surge in technology, 96% of AA Mtgs are suspended). "Seems like AA shut down"
- AA group/members are meeting via Zoom, WebEx, Hangouts etc...
- Read November 1960 *Grapevine* quote wrote by Bill. - *"Nothing matters more to AA's future welfare than the manner in which we use the colossus of modern communication. Used unselfishly and well, it can produce results surpassing our present imagination."*
- "We are not experts or lawyers, we are here today to bring information so that groups, districts, and area so we can make informed decisions.

2:10p Mike R., DCM D-10: Groups That DID NOT Suspend F2F Meetings

- Group had an emergency group conscience based on the suggestion of guidelines by the mayor. Some members were upset about the possibility to have to close the group. Another emergency group conscience took place. Meeting stayed open, everything is the same except, no holding hands, limit number of members in the room, etc...
- The biggest lesson from this experience is trust the process and the traditions of AA. There is no right answer, let the decision be up to the group in a group conscience meeting. It is better to go with the group conscience than let the meeting fizzle.
- There are members currently reaching out to mayor and local authorities to stay updated on guidelines.

2:15p Mary T., DCM 3B: Groups That DID Suspend F2F Meetings

- We have a lot of groups and meetings, in club houses, private facilities, and churches. Initial reaction was really was driven by the landlord. Most decisions were made at the group level except for ones that were unable to use their current facility. Churches were the first to close the doors, the large club house was meeting for a little bit until it was decided to temporarily shut down due to guidelines being announced.
- Most meetings have gone to Zoom platform. These groups are meeting under their own format. Acclimating to Zoom took some time.
- Read 1945 article out of language of the heart. "what is vitally important is we have unity". "How do we carry the message; how do we get in touch with these people"?

2:20p Rob M., Coastal Bend Intergroup Association Office Manager

- Provide support services, serves a square footage the size of Connecticut.
- Facility has been closed with staff working at home.
- Currently not selling anything.
- Phone helpline is still open 24/7
- Trustees had a meeting on zoom
- Topics being looked at and needing discussion, - Maintaining the internet/website, having a chat online for the future. Technology will be more important in the future with the use of phones and tablets, how will this affect us?

2:25p Barbara R., SWTA 68 Area Chair

- Currently there are 32 districts, 26 have a District Committee Member (DCM), and 600 registered groups.

- Read Concept 9
- Currently involved in weekly meetings with other area chairs on how to move forward.
- SWTA68 Summer Workshop -The decision as to how we will be handling how we meet will be made by using the traditions.
- “We are in a unique situation with this pandemic, we don’t have past experience, we are making history and have to consider things we decide now will effect the future of AA as a whole.

2:30p Pam J., Panel 62 Delegate: Guidelines on Public Meetings

- CDC guidelines have changed over the month or so and even weekly.
- Important Reminder: the virus has no vaccine at present.
- The virus spreads through respiratory droplets, such as coughing sneezing. If you are close enough to the person, it can affect you. If the person who is affected touches things, this to is a way for the virus to spread.
- Wear a face mask, CDC recommendation is that is should cover both nose and mouth. It does not have to be a surgical mask, but a cloth mask will do as well. You are protecting yourself, loved ones, and others by doing this.
- If you are feeling sick stay home.
- We see some states starting to open up, we are going to see some numbers going up.

2:40p Denise T., Panel 66 Delegate: Hygiene P66

- So much we still don’t know about this virus, information is changing weekly.
- Currently, Temperature is being taken as a precaution. The problem with this is that if someone has a temperature, they usually already have been sick for a few days.
- Many people will not have symptoms, and will be carriers
- Wear mask, hand washing for 20sec. is the best defense, If there is no water and soap use a sanitizer base with at minimum 60% alcohol.
- Think about all the things you touch the moment you enter in a building
- We can carry the virus by are hands by touching at the last location we were at.
- When removing a mask, remove by the ties not the actual mask itself.
- In a face to face meeting practice social distancing, do not pass an actual basket, do not provide coffee services, and no hugging or hand holding.
- No. 1 thing to remember, it is not about us, it is about the fellow man, this is a foundation lesson in AA.

2:50p Harold B., A.A. Member: Other Considerations

- I am not an attorney nor giving any legal advice or representing any of the companies I work for.
- I am in the business of discussing and protecting by talking to people about risks and what could happen.
- “I asked an attorney. what if..... Attorney says, “never say never in a lawsuit”.
- What if someone got sick and wanted to sue them? It would be hard to pinpoint exactly where it started
- Questions to be asked ... Will the insurance be covered, if the business has been given the right to open again? Where is the negligence of the insured?
- Traditions protect us how we conduct business, but legally we must follow guidelines and laws.
- 2 days ago, 3 people in a local halfway house were positive. One knew they were positive, the other 2 had no idea they were.

- Question to yourself; If a go face to face meeting would I know if anyone there was positive or not.
- Business including mine are putting up signs that clients must wear masks to enter the building.

ASK-IT-BASKET SESSION

AREA CHAIR

1. What are some of the logistical obstacles to conducting an Area Assembly on a virtual platform?
 - a. Some areas have already been meeting virtually before the pandemic.
 - b. There really are no logistics, they allow for break outs, to have committee workshops, multiple at a time, allow language translation. Tools are there if we go that way.
 - c. A few practice sessions would need to be done before hand if that is the way chosen to go for area.
2. How would an online Area Assembly agenda differ from the typical face-to-face Assembly Agenda?
 - a. Online assembly would not the norm that is current in SWTA68 of meeting Friday thru Sunday
 - b. It has been shown that peoples attention span last about four to five hours with breaks in between.
 - c. An abbreviated version would have to be discussed. A time limit is needed to keep people's attention.
3. Are groups and Districts reaching out for support since the COVID-19 pandemic started?
 - a. Yes, they want to know what is going on with other groups and districts to make a decision.
4. What are other Areas planning to do about holding assemblies, workshops, and other events?
 - a. Currently there are other Areas holding Assemblies Virtually, they have been doing it before the pandemic

PANEL 70 ALTERNATE DELEGATE

1. What is the situation in New York? Is the General Service Conference meeting this year?
 - a. General Service Conference members have been doing virtual work
 - b. Will be meeting virtually May 16–19, 2020, six hours per day.
 - c. Our Delegate will forward the final agenda when it is finalized.
2. Has there been input from GSO etc. regarding this issue? If so, what?
 - a. All updates are on AA.org
 - b. Jeff W., GSO Group services desk, shared this certain workshop with many people so that they may be informed as he does not have all information to share
 - c. Box 459 "AA and the Law"; We should follow the rules of the CDC, membership does not grant immunity to the law. We need to follow the law.

PANEL 62 DELEGATE.

- Does the CDC require facemasks? Are there special conditions or exemptions?
 - a. Doesn't require them, strongly recommends them. They want you to cover both your nose and mouth. Any cloth covering will be okay.
- Do you suggest signage about best practices be posted in meeting locations?

- a. It is good to put a sign up in the meeting place. Groups should consider having someone outside the meeting room to explain the safety guidelines the group has decided on.
- b. Multiple groups that meet at a facility should speak to one another about safety guidelines to be on the same page.
- How do you suggest turning away a person due to capacity? What about the 'Hand of AA'?
 - a. It goes back to the group conscience. In Victoria they have started opening up a little bit.
 - b. You have to think about the size of the group and how you will limit the number.
 - c. Should have all decisions considered before opening up a meeting again or you will run into a lot of problems with questions.
 - d. The women's group in Victoria has made sure to reach out to others to check in on them. This is what being a home group member to a home group is about. The church says they can go back on the 15th of May but will be waiting till June 1st to see what happens and have another discussion.
- Is there a handy checklist our small groups can have to make sure we are ready to open?
 - a. Not aware of a checklist, you want to make sure the safety of your members are at the top of the list. Having items such wipes, and hand sanitizer.
 - b. P66 Del. – There is a checklist for church attendees at Texas Department of State Health Services by Governor Abbott. With many meetings at churches this would be a good guideline to go by.

PANEL 64 DELEGATE.

1. What is the real hold up?
 - a. Perhaps we do not have enough information or feel safe, some of the groups are small while others have 500 people in a group.
 - b. Each and everyone have been affected by covid19. There are lots of people out of work and sick, many things have shut down.
 - c. Change is difficult sometimes, uncertainty leads to fear.
2. Why are we rushing this?
 - a. Every group, district, area, and intergroup office have their own autonomy to decide on what to do
 - b. Things move slowly in AA, getting the conversation started is what we are doing today.
3. Is there a way to make online meetings secure? Our group uses Go-To-Meetings.
 - a. Use a password with each meeting, have someone who is watching who is coming into the meeting, You have a right to kick someone out who is not supposed to be in the meeting or acting inappropriately. The Austin Bid for ICYPAA conducted workshops on 1) How to Setup a Zoom Meeting and Voting Procedures, and 2) How to Prevent Zoombombing. Both workshops are available on the AA Grapevine webpage under the You Tube tab.

PANEL 66 DELEGATE.

1. What information do I need to feel secure in going back to face to face meetings?
 - a. Ask yourself questions.
 - b. Am I in a high-risk category? A lot of people do not fit the standard.
 - c. Is my home group going to be practicing social distancing?
 - d. Will members be asked to wear mask, use hand sanitizer, and not hold hands?

2. Any suggestions for addressing those who stridently argue for in person meetings as well as those who stridently argue against them, seems like we're developing a civil war...
 - a. AA mirrors the society to which we live. Traditions guide us and realize AA is a "WE" program, its not all about me.
 - b. We are not above the law, we need to educate ourselves, we have a responsibility bigger than ourselves.

DCM 10

1. How are districts reaching out to treatment center's?
 - a. ICYPAA bid committee has been having zoom workshops on how to get a zoom meeting into treatment centers. Check out the AA Grapevine webpage, You Tube tab.
 - b. Go to grapevine YouTube channel and watch the recorded videos.
 - c. Clients and AA members can sign a HIPPA waiver forms
 - d. There currently is not much in experience in this.
2. How do we Properly discourage the use of Zoom meetings going forward?
 - a. Everyone has there own passion about it.
 - b. There is no correct answer, make sure everyone is heard and get the chance to speak.
 - c. Don't use words like "how do we discourage Zoom" say instead "should we continue Zoom"?
 - d. Have faith in the process we use in AA.
 - e. A good % of meetings that are open are not having members coming in to meet.
 - f. A conference line was helpful to others that did not want to use zoom, it helped the barrier of having to not use a computer.

DCM 3B

1. Will AA as a whole open up regular meetings or will it be up to individual groups via group conscience meetings?
 - a. It would be up to an individual group for the decision.
2. How important is substantial unanimity in determining when to resume in-person meetings?
 - a. Opinion is that it is the proper way to go, it is the voice of group conscience. Everyone should be able to be heard and have minority opinion.
3. Has your meeting attendance changed since the pandemic started? Despite being deemed an essential business by the city of Austin, my group does not have the resources to supply the necessary supplies (hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, masks, etc.) to ensure the safety of in-person meetings. Is this something that the district plans to help groups with?
 - a. Yes & No, smaller meetings have maintained the group.
 - b. A larger meeting here with an attendance of 80 went to 46, some have fallen out.
 - c. Lots of debate would need to happen at the district about providing such supplies.
 - d. No direct answer can be given as it is up to the district
 - e. Some districts have more money than others.

INSURANCE

1. Could a member's identity be made public if a group is faced with a lawsuit?
 - a. Never say Never in a lawsuit – if you say "could that happen" it certainly could.
 - b. We are not immune; AA membership does not grant immunity. We are not jurisdiction of law officers.
 - c. You are not protected by law in meetings if you were to say things such as your 5th step, it is always a risk.
 - d. We are not immune to the difficulties that happen to people

- e. Good judgement and common sense is the greatest guide.

INTERGROUP

1. How do we spread the word to others suffering wanting to learn about our program, if we don't have a front door anymore?
 - a. When they call in, we give them the option of face to face or zoom meetings.
 - b. Corpus Christi still has face to face groups meetings.
 - c. Help line is front door, groups are the front door, and while I never thought intergroup is a front door it has been lately.
2. How to encourage donations during limited online attendance? Assistance when rent is due, even though we do not make as much as we used to?
 - a. You can donate online using PayPal. The option of mailing a check still works.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Do the groups that have a hybrid style (face to face & zoom) splitting the group?
 - a. Mary DCM – There is a group that is doing that, and it seems to be effective for them. Another group also was doing it but ultimately stopped. Other groups are looking at going that route.
 - b. A group that is doing hybrid points the phone to the door to keep people online comfortable.
 - c. At One group some members do a zoom meeting others face to face meetings.
 - d. Mike DCM – one group is using zoom and phone conference lines.
2. If your group is doing zoom and not meeting in person, how are you collecting 7th tradition?
 - a. Venmo, PayPal, old fashioned mail works well.
3. Are there recommendations for outside meetings?
 - a. Mary – yes, their groups meeting are meeting outside, under a patio, or a space in a circle, practicing the social distancing, some are meeting in their homes.
 - b. Trying to be very respectful of one another, not sure if they are enforcing others to wear a mask,
 - c. It's best to bring your own beverage, no hand holding and be thoughtful of others.
4. A lot of people are court ordered to get paper signed, how do they get them signed?
 - a. Noelle (Killeen, TX) – the individual contacts the meeting chair, gets an email from them for a confirmation.