

## Southern California Policy For Resolving Group and Member Concerns

*(Do Not Refer Policy)*

“In our Al-Anon groups and service arms, our freedom is balanced with the responsibility to preserve our Traditions and abide by Al-Anon principles.”

-- *Conflict Resolution Tool*, “Autonomy: Freedom with balance”

“While we were responsible for conducting our meetings, we were asked to give primary consideration to the unity of Al-Anon as a whole.”

-- *When I Got Busy, I Got Better*

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## Policy Preamble

The Fourth Tradition says: “Each group is autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or AA as a whole.”

This policy was developed as a resource for any individual, group, district, Al-Anon Information Service (Intergroup)/Literature Distribution Center, or any component of the Southern California World Service (SCWS) Area with concerns about conduct that might affect any Al-Anon member, group, or Al-Anon as a whole. It was developed after careful review of the Traditions, Concepts, Warranties, as well as the World Service Office-reviewed policies of other Areas.

The following principles guided the development of this policy:

- Al-Anon presumes good will, believing that every member of Al-Anon sincerely wants what’s best for individual members as well as Al-Anon as a whole.
- That, when concerns arise, they are first addressed by collaborative information-gathering.
- Any significant departure from Al-Anon’s spiritual principles and policies as outlined in Al-Anon’s Legacies – the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts – as well as the current edition of the *Service Manual*, current Conference Approved Literature, and current Al-Anon Guidelines, will first be addressed by education.
- Right of Appeal is built into the fact-finding process.
- If problems remain after an educational process, there is opportunity to correct or clarify misunderstandings on either side before there is a recommendation, which may include removal of a group from the online and printed directories.
- There is a process by which a group can become listed again.
- The *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* says of Warranty Five of Concept Twelve that our Conference “will always try to act with mutual respect and love, one member for another; that no action will be taken in anger, haste or recklessness; that care will be observed to protect all minorities; that no action will be personally punitive; that, whenever possible, important actions will be taken in substantial unanimity; and that our Conference will ever be prudently on guard against tyrannies, great and small, whether these be found in the majority or in the minority.”

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**The Policy**

In order to consider the unity of Al-Anon as a whole, the clarity of its message, and to help ensure the safety of individual members, the Southern California Area refers members and newcomers to groups that adhere to:

- (1) the current *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*
- (2) current Al-Anon Guidelines
- (3) the exclusive use of current Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature (CAL)
- (4) the principles expressed in the “Three Obstacles”
- (5) current editions of the CAL on sponsorship: “Sponsorship – Working Together to Recover” (M-78), “Service Sponsorship” (P-88), “Sponsorship, What It’s All About” (P-31)

\* “Current” is defined as at the time any issue is reported under the policy.

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How the Policy Works

**Reporting concerns**

Any individual may report concerns about group practices through any means of communication, but those concerns will ultimately be directed to the Delegate, Alternate Delegate, and Immediate Past Delegate. There will be a dedicated SCWS email account and mailing address for member concerns. (TBD)

**Evaluation of Concerns**

The Delegate (primary contact), Alternate Delegate, and Immediate Past Delegate will make an initial assessment of the concern. They also have the authority to appoint others to assist them.

If the concern is not so severe as to result in removing the group's listing from local directories, the concern may be resolved with education and/or a conversation with an Area Officer. The District and Al-Anon Information Service/Literature Distribution Center (AIS/LDC) should be made aware of the resolution.

If there is a determination that the reported concern needs more evaluation, the Delegate, Alternate Delegate, and Immediate Past Delegate may appoint a fact-finding team.

The District and Al-Anon Information Service/Literature Distribution Center (AIS/LDC) are informed that a fact-finding activity is in progress.

**Fact-Finding**

The fact-finding team begins by contacting the group to open a line of communication and continues to gather information until the Delegate, Alternate Delegate, and Immediate Past Delegate have enough information to make a recommendation. This collaborative dialogue will involve the group itself, as well as any affected members, thereby ensuring that everyone can exercise the right of appeal.

## How the Policy Works

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#### **Resolution**

If the recommendation does not involve removing the group from local printed and online meeting directories, the recommendation is discussed with the group, and any necessary education is provided.

If the recommendation involves removing the group from local meeting directories, the group is first informed in a conversation explaining the decision and then is provided in writing by certified mail with the actions/changes needed in order to retain its listing(s). According to the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* and the *Al-Anon Information Services Guidelines (G-4)*, if a group is removed from online and printed directories, the group still remains active with voice and vote at the Area Assembly, District, Literature Distribution Center (LDC) and/or Al-Anon Information Service (Intergroup).

In both cases, the original reporting individual is informed of the outcome as are the District and AIS(Intergroup)/LDC.

When the recommendation is to remove the group from local meeting directories, the Area will request that the meeting be removed from all hard copy and online directories at both the District and AIS (Intergroup)/LDC. The Area will also inform the WSO of its recommendation.

#### **Archiving**

A full report of the fact-finding and decision is confidentially archived to ensure that future officers with a need to know are aware of the history of any reported concern that warranted the creation of a Resolution Team.

#### **Right of Appeal / Relist Process**

The group submits a request to be relisted to the Delegate, Alternate Delegate, and/or Immediate Past Delegate. The request should include the group's corrective actions since the group was removed from local meeting directories.

The Delegate, Alternate Delegate, and Immediate Past Delegate will make an initial assessment and, within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the request to relist, will either respond to the request in writing or authorize the creation of another Resolution Team to engage in a new round of fact-finding.