

# HMB Area 48 | Reopening Service Piece

The purpose of this document is to provide information for groups to **CONSIDER** as they move towards reopening in-person meetings after the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Due to the dynamics of the current situation, it is extremely important to have a group conscience meeting to plan & decide how reopening a meeting is to happen in a safe and spiritual way.*

*This service piece can be used for home groups, District meetings, Area meetings, Central Offices, and meetings brought into facilities such as treatment or correctional facilities. **It will be updated regularly so please check back as things continue to change. More will be revealed!***

## Getting Started

It is suggested that each group be prepared in advance for reopening. Group members are encouraged to meet virtually & create their own reopening plan.

- Discuss with your landlord or facility contact:
  - If the facility is ready for meetings to return. **Having a key does not automatically mean that meetings can resume**, even if your group has a reopening plan.
  - Be prepared to consider other options if the group will not be able to return to the space
  - Ask if there are facility-specific procedures
  - Let them know the group's safety procedures (sanitizing, social distancing, masks, etc.)
- [Check statewide & regional regulations, & CDC guidelines](#)  
    *"The law of the land does not stop at the door of AA."*
- [Refer to guidance from Area / GSO / etc.](#) & reach out to District & Area with questions
- Do a walk-through to create a checklist of surfaces to disinfect & other safety procedures
- [Consider new or revised service opportunities](#)

## Suggested Topics for Discussion as You Plan for Reopening

- **Meeting Procedures**
  - Safety protocols if someone comes to the meeting & is sick:
    - It is strongly encouraged that sick individuals do not attend meetings, to protect the well-being of other attendees, their families, the meeting space, etc.
    - Provide them with phone numbers, Zoom meeting info, & other resources in a plastic baggie to take home with them
    - Announce anonymously at the meeting & inform GSR / District that the group may have been exposed
    - Consider collecting email addresses to alert members
    - [Consider contact tracing](#)
  - Meeting scripts can be adjusted to include:
    - Group & facility safety guidelines - explain that these are for everyone's safety
    - How to stay connected if not able to come to in-person meetings
    - Where group members can find [GSO, Area, & District resources & guidelines](#)
    - An explanation of [contact tracing](#) if your group decides to implement it

- Coffee / snacks:
  - Consider suspending hospitality for the time being
  - Consider a BYOB policy - “Bring your Own Beverage”
  - Consider having one person handle all hospitality while wearing [PPE \(face mask & gloves\)](#)
- Literature:
  - Consider a BYOB policy - “Bring your own Book”
  - Change format from passing book to one person reading
  - Disinfect shared literature before / after the meeting
  - Consider alternatives to sharing copies of [Grapevine / La Viña](#) (or have at least a 72 hour quarantine period for pre-owned or donated literature)
- Newcomers:
  - Pre-printed sheet of group members & phone numbers
  - Literature, phone numbers, pamphlets, & other resources in a plastic baggie
- Anniversaries:
  - Consider how to handle coins, cake, cards, etc.
- Finances:
  - Some of the items that the group discusses & determines to be requirements for reopening may require money (for example, the purchase of cleaning products or hand sanitizer). Ensure the group members and treasurer are informed of this.
- Accessibility:
  - [Virtual option](#) to increase accessibility
  - Small in-person meetings for homebound individuals & how to do so safely
- **Meeting Delivery Format**
  - Discuss whether your meeting will continue as an online meeting, [have a hybrid meeting](#), or meet in person only
  - Consider offering an online meeting at a day/time that does not conflict with other meetings
  - Consider adding a service position for chairing online meeting(s)
  - Update your meeting information with the District & Area Records in order to be listed accurately
  - Submit updated meeting information to Area Records at least 3 days prior to reopening. Online meeting change form: <https://aahmbny.org/new-group-form-group-change-form>
- **Accessibility - In-person Meetings with Virtual (online) Component**
  - Consider costs & availability of technology, wifi, tech knowledge, etc.
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  - Consider costs & availability of technology, wifi, tech knowledge, etc.
  - Consider whether the group will purchase their own account / technology or use a group member’s.
  - Consider the anonymity of those attending the in-person meeting
  - Consider adding service position(s), e.g. virtual meeting host(s), “spiritual bouncer” for Zoom bombers, and/or technology chair

- **[7th Tradition](#) - How to Pass the Basket:**
  - Consider having one group member carry the basket around
  - Provide gloves to the Chair / Treasurer (or whoever handles the money)
  - Consider [digital options](#) of contributing - hand out cards with digital basket info
- **PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)**
  - Executive orders have been issued requiring everyone to wear masks or [face coverings in public](#)
  - If someone does not wish to comply with wearing a mask, they could be brought outside the meeting space by two homegroup members to talk or given a list of phone numbers & virtual meetings
  - Meetings could provide masks - purchased or made by group members - for free or at cost
  - Make hand sanitizer available to attendees (alcohol-free suggested)
  - Provide gloves to trusted servants who handle meeting materials, 7th tradition, etc.
- **Social Distancing**
  - Maximum number of meeting attendees:
    - Check [NY state guidelines](#) on sizes of gatherings
    - Consider overflow space if too many people show up
    - Have 2 homegroup members go to overflow space with attendees
    - Check with facility on whether this is an option
  - Seating arranged 6 feet apart as per Executive Orders from the governor
  - Greeters: no handshakes or hugs
  - Consider how to end meeting with a socially distant circle
  - Consider fellowshiping before / after meeting in parking lot outside of meeting space
- **Contact Tracing**
  - What is it? *Trace & monitor everyone who came into contact with someone who is ill. Notify them of their exposure. Support the quarantine of contacts. Help ensure the safe, sustainable & effective quarantine of contacts to prevent additional transmission.*
  - Consider how your group would inform other members and attendees if someone attended and tested positive for COVID-19
  - Consider if / how your group will participate in contact tracing
  - Consider how your group will handle confidentiality / anonymity
  - Consider adding information in the meeting script to explain contact tracing
  - **NEW SUGGESTION:** Have attendees who wish to participate in contact tracing write their first name & phone number on a piece of paper. Provide extra pens or a way to sanitize pens between each user. That sheet of paper can then be placed in a dated & sealed envelope, to be opened only if there is a need to alert attendees about possible exposure at the meeting they attended. After 30 days, shred or safely discard the sealed envelope.

### **What to Do if an AA Member Tests Positive for COVID-19 & Attended Your Meeting**

- Contact your local Department of Health for guidance
  - Note: You do **not** have to disclose it is an AA meeting - you can simply say “community organization”
- If the group has maintained a list of attendees & their contact information for the date(s) the positive-tested person attended the meeting, notify other attendees anonymously
  - The notification can be as simple as “A person who attended the meeting on <date> has tested positive for COVID-19 & you may wish to contact your physician for additional guidance”
  - Direct attendees to NYS COVID website & suggest 14-day self-isolation as recommended by CDC
- Consider suspending face-to-face meetings for a period of time
  - Consult local or state health department or CDC guidelines
- Provide basic, anonymous information about the incident to [webmaster@aaahmbny.org](mailto:webmaster@aaahmbny.org), who can then post information on the COVID-19 page on the HMB Area Website for member awareness. Please include:
  - Group Name
  - Group Location
  - Date(s) that the individual attended the meeting

### Consider New or Revised Service Opportunities

- **Spiritual Sanitizer / Safety Person:** wipe down contact surfaces such as chairs, tables, door knobs, etc. prior to & immediately after the meeting
- **Revised Greeter Duties:** hands out 7th Tradition card with online giving options, take-home meeting lists / literature / new meeting protocols / group member phone numbers
- **Designated 7th Tradition Basket Collector:** collects & handles money
- **Coffee server:** if group is still providing coffee, consider appointing one person to handle all coffee service
- **Revised Secretary Duties:** appoint notification duties (see above)
- **GSR / Group Contact:** if group does not have a GSR or group contact on file with Area / District, appoint one to stay abreast of changes / updates related to the Area & District
- **Technology Person:** maintain virtual component to meetings; host virtual meetings & oversee technical component; “spiritual bouncer” for meeting interruptions

### Our Traditions

*Above all, each group is asked to consider the AA Principles as the guiding force to a group conscience &, in particular, to pay close attention to the following Traditions:*

**Tradition 1** Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

**Tradition 4** Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups, or A.A. as a whole.

**Tradition 5** Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

**Tradition 7** Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

**Tradition 10** Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues, hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

**Tradition 11** Our public relations policy is based upon attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio & films.

**Tradition 12** Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Thank you to Area 48 New York – for sharing such a great resource.