

A CHECKLIST OF SECRETARIAL DUTIES

“The AA Group...Where It All Begins” pamphlet (in this packet of info) suggests how to start a group and how various groups may function. It does not tell anyone what to do. But for new members, new officers and any other interested A.A.’s, it describes many of the good, proven-by-experience ways that other members have used in their groups to “stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.”

Each group is different. Most groups require at least 6 months of continuous sobriety for their secretary as many groups give the secretary a high level of responsibility. It helps if the secretary has held other jobs within the group such as coffee maker or greeter and has taken a turn on the setup and/or clean-up detail. In that way, the secretary will be familiar with the chores needed to set up and to close a meeting. If the secretary has attended a group conscience/business meeting, he or she will have had the opportunity to learn of past group decisions.

Almost never is a secretary responsible for all the items covered in the suggestions that follow, but it is helpful if the secretary knows who in the group is responsible.

SUGGESTIONS

- To receive the monthly bulletin, contact Baltimore Intergroup at 410-663-1922 or Fax to 410-663-7465 to notify the office that you are the new secretary of your group. Feel free to stop by the office at 8635 Loch Raven Boulevard, Suite 4, 2nd floor and introduce yourself. The monthly bulletin is sent, usually to the secretary, either via U.S. Postal Service or email.
- You can take the bulletin to the meeting, post it, read it aloud or make it available, whichever is the practice of the group. Also, the secretary distributes materials in the bulletin to other “trusted servants” to whom that material is directed.
- Learn what needs to be done to open and secure the building and the meeting room. Know who to contact if there is a problem with the facility.
- Often it is the secretary who welcomes newcomers to the meeting. When a new person or out-of-towner calls the Intergroup Office, they are told of the meeting location, day and time and it may be suggested that they introduce themselves to the secretary. The secretary would then arrange for a group member or members to speak to the newcomer.
- If your group conscience has established a meeting format and has assigned responsibilities as to who finds the speakers, follow that format and the assignment of responsibility. The secretary may have the responsibility in the case of “Discussion” meetings where a member of another group is invited to “chair” the meeting, share and introduce a topic.
- Let the speaker know of the meeting format and encourage him or her to be brief so that more may share
- If a meeting is a “Speakers” meeting, a “Speakers Committee” may be responsible for finding a speaker. Whenever the speaker is expected to speak for the hour, let the speaker know in advance. In either format, it appears to be best to have a variety of speakers, reflecting different backgrounds, lengths of sobriety and experiences “before and after.” To find someone outside the group and outside of the nearby area, the search person or committee usually is expected to visit outside meetings.
- “Each group has but one primary purpose, to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.” Remember that the reason for the meeting is to carry out the group’s primary purpose.
- Almost everywhere, the secretary opens and closes the meetings.

- Make newcomers feel welcome. Some groups have “greeters” at the door, others have a system of assigning a temporary sponsor for the newcomer. Whatever your group’s system, it is important to learn how it works and let the newcomer know how it works. Let the newcomers know about other meetings. Freely share your experience, strength and hope. Remember that no one speaks for AA, not even the group secretary. If you do not know the answer to a question, it is alright to admit it and find someone who can answer the question.
- If necessary, the secretary handles any disruptions which may occur during the meeting or an experienced group member will speak up or assist as necessary. If you must take action, pray for guidance and act in a spirit of helping the group. It is not necessary to be hasty since many people run out of wind or steam on their own. (A calm suggestion to the person to give others a chance to speak is usually enough.)
- The secretary sees to it that the collection is turned over to the treasurer. The secretary may count the collection and record the amount in the meeting log, if there is one. Usually, the treasurer has the one duty of depositing the money and paying the bills. In any case, learn where the collection goes (how much for rent, refreshments, literature, etc.). Of the amount remaining, after expenses have been paid, how much goes to Intergroup, to Maryland General Service, to General Service in New York and the Institution Committee if the groups wish to support that committee but does not use the “Pink Can.”
- Every month, the Intergroup Bulletin includes a list of anniversaries for the upcoming month. It is best to fax, call in, **email or mail the anniversaries to Intergroup by the 15th of the month prior to the month of celebration** (i.e., an anniversary for March 23 should be called in by February 15th). Find out who has the responsibility for contacting the Intergroup re: Anniversaries, the Group “Birthday,” etc.
- If the group has a membership roster, the secretary may be responsible for maintaining it. The group may circulate a list of active group members with telephone numbers of its group members. Learn whether your group has such a practice and what your responsibility is.
- Most groups elect a member to pick up AA literature. If they do not, find out if the secretary has that responsibility. In most groups, there is a charge for books but not for pamphlets and directories. Find out what your group does.
- You may see things about the group you believe could be improved. You may get ideas from other meetings that you want your group to adopt or group members or others may suggest how you should run or conduct the meeting. Remember that the secretary does not “run” the group or meeting and that your group may have previously examined and rejected the changes that you are considering. By our second tradition, the ultimate authority is our higher power as expressed in our group conscience. Even so, some groups allow the secretary more room for personal style than others. Know your group.
- Know your other group members and who does other jobs for the group. Who is the Intergroup Rep, the Institutional Rep, and the GSR? What are their responsibilities in those positions? Who in your group can you turn to for answers to the many and varied questions that you or others may certainly have about your group or any matter concerning AA?

Note: These suggests were generated by a workshop on “Secretarial Duties.” The workshop looked to the pamphlet “The AA Group” (P-16), and the experiences that the many local AA members brought to the workshop.