

Guidelines for SA Sponsorship

**Including Temporary Sponsorship
A Work in Progress/Draft VIII**

**Adopted by
Central California Intergroup
January 19, 2013**

**Revised
February 6, 2014 and January 26, 2016**

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“As with all teacher/student relationships, it is difficult to tell who learns more: the sponsor or the sponsee”

From: Twelve Step Sponsorship by B. Hamilton

Introduction

Over the past several years the Sacramento SA Fellowship has held an annual workshop on Sponsorship. At the conclusion of each session, participants in the workshops have reiterated that:

- They needed and appreciated suggestions on how to be an effective and useful sponsor.
- It would be useful to have a resource sharing sponsorship guidelines and best practices.

At the January 21, 2012, workshop, the group decided that they would take responsibility for creating a “Guidelines for SA Sponsorship” to be shared with the Intergroup for their consideration, amendment, and possible approval for use within the fellowship.

- A draft of the guidelines were shared with the Sacramento, Tuesday Night Meeting of SA in May of 2012. The document was amended with suggestions made at that meeting.
- In November, 2012, the Sacramento Intergroup approved use of the guidelines within the fellowship and especially for Sponsorship Workshops.
- In January, 2013 and 2016, SA members reviewed this document and made a number of recommendations for additions and amendments that now are included in this Sponsorship Guide.

This is the eight draft and should be always a “work in progress.

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How did sponsorship start in recovery fellowships?

“In the earliest days of A.A. (sic), the term “sponsor” was not in the A.A. jargon. Then a few hospitals in Akron, Ohio and New York began to accept alcoholics (under the diagnosis) as patients—if a sober A.A. member would agree to “sponsor” the sick man or woman. The sponsor took the patient to the hospital, visited him or her regularly, was present when the patient was discharged, and took the patient home and then to an A.A. meeting. At the meeting, the sponsor introduced the newcomer to other happily nondrinking alcoholics. All through the early months of recovery, the sponsor stood by, ready to answer questions or to listen whenever needed. Sponsorship turned out to be such a good way to help people get established in A.A. that it has become a custom followed throughout the A.A. world, even when hospitalization is not necessary. (Found in *Living Sober*, an early AA (sic) Publication)

What is the definition of a sponsor and temporary sponsor?

“An alcoholic who has made some progress in the recovery program shares that experience on a continuous, individual basis with another alcoholic who is attempting to attain or maintain sobriety through AA. Every sponsor is different, just as each sponsee is different, but certain activities, responsibilities, and obligations are common in sponsor/ sponsee relationships.”

“Helping a sponsee work the Steps is a sponsor’s most important function. The Twelve Steps are the foundation of AA and other Twelve Step recovery. The Steps require individual action, but they are not meant to be worked alone. A sponsor can help translate the general principles of the Steps into specific activities of the lives of the sponsees.” (B., Hamilton’s Book)

It is customary in the SA fellowship for a member to have at least six months of continuous sobriety and have completed the third step before becoming a sponsor for another member.

Often, the first step of sponsorship is to become a “temporary sponsor” for a newcomer. However, within the SA Fellowship, there is an unfortunate lack of clarity about the difference between a temporary and a permanent sponsor. The next section will attempt to clarify the difference in roles between a temporary and permanent sponsor.

What is a temporary sponsor?

- A temporary sponsor’s role is to welcome and orient a new member to the SA program and to assist the newcomer find a permanent sponsor.
- A temporary sponsor may be assigned a new member of the fellowship after his/her first meeting if he/she desires to begin the process of recovery.
- A temporary sponsor’s role may not last more than one or two months, and may include the following:
- Introduce the SA program by:
 - Making a follow-up call to sponsee after the first meeting to answer questions and to see how the newcomer is doing.
 - Setting up a face to face meeting to review materials included in the newcomer packet and to get to know the new member better. Temporary sponsor may share his/her own story and hear story of sponsee.
 - Sharing how sobriety is defined in the SA Fellowship (From Pg. 191/192 of the White Book)
“Thus, for the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having no form of sex with self or with persons other than the spouse. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from sex of any kind. And for all of us, single and married alike, sexual sobriety also includes progressive victory over lust.”

- Introducing the three principal books used in our program—The Big Book, The White Book, and the Twelve and Twelve.
- Sharing the list of names and phone numbers of members and encouraging the newcomer to begin making phone calls to other fellows.
- Reviewing the place and time of other SA Meetings.
- Introducing the newcomer to other members and making recommendations of people to call.
- Sharing information about characteristics new member might want to look for in a permanent sponsor, including the following:
 - Has what you want
 - Has a sponsor of his/her own who can be a resource when the sponsor is unavailable
 - Emphasizes working the twelve steps
 - Is further along working the steps than you are
 - Has more time in recovery than you do
 - Has time for phone calls and periodic face to face meetings
 - Understands the spiritual nature of the program
 - Is the same gender as you
 - Provides service to others in the program
 - Models honesty and humility
 - Walks the talk
 - Lives in the solution, not the problem
 - Has emotional balance and appropriate boundaries
- Explaining how a newcomer might find a new sponsor including the following possibilities:
 - Listen carefully at meetings to those whose story you identify with and what they have to say.
 - Let the fellowship know that you are seeking a sponsor and ask who is available.
 - Ask your temporary sponsor for recommendations.
 - Once you have identified the person, find out if he has time to be your sponsor and make The Ask.
 - Don't take it personally if the person says NO. Many sponsors are already working with a number of fellows, but they may be willing to make recommendations.
 - The temporary sponsor may be a prime candidate to become permanent sponsor.

What is the role of a permanent sponsor?

- The primary responsibility of a permanent SA sponsor is to walk the newcomer through the Twelve Steps and to help him/her apply the principles found in the steps to his/her daily life.
- Walking the sponsee through writing and presenting the first step is an important first responsibility.
- A sponsor does everything possible, within the limits of his/her personal experience and knowledge, to support the sponsee in getting and staying sober through the SA Program.
- A sponsor shares information about the tools of the program and how to use them.
- A sponsor encourages the sponsee to become familiar with and use the literature of the program, the step-writing guides, and other resources (workshops, conferences, etc.) available to him or her.
- A sponsor shares information about meeting times and places, phone lists, and the traditions and practices of the SA Fellowship.
- A sponsor encourages the sponsee to join SA group activities and to volunteer to be of service to the fellowship, as soon as appropriate.
- A sponsor makes himself/herself available to the sponsee when special problems arise.
- The sponsor may reach out to the sponsee, if he/she drops out of sight for a time.
- A sponsor shows by example and experience what SA has meant in his/her life.
- Most importantly, the sponsor is accessible to the sponsee in times of difficulty.
- The permanent sponsor also prepares the sponsee to become a sponsor him/herself.
- The permanent sponsor or the sponsee may choose to end the relationship, if either feels like the relationship is toxic to his/her own recovery or if the relationship is not found to be useful to either in their recovery process.

How does a sponsor get started with a new sponsee?

- Schedule a face-to-face meeting with the new sponsee, as soon as possible. Here are some potential topics for this meeting:
- Share your story and encourage the sponsee to do the same. Listen carefully to his/her story without judgement.
- Explain what sexual sobriety means in the SA fellowship.
- Learn what the sponsee hopes to achieve in recovery.
- Explain the “whys” as well as the “whats” of actions being suggested to the sponsee.
- Exchange e-mail addresses and phone numbers and other important contact information.
- Agree on specific call times and make it clear if there are times when sponsee should not call.
- Talk about the importance of honesty, confidentiality, and anonymity within the program and the sponsor-sponsee relationship.
- Emphasize the importance of attending meetings and agree on how many meetings sponsee will attend each week.
- Provide direction and support for sponsee as he/she begins to work on the steps.

- Agree on reasonable deadlines when work will be completed and presented.
- Introduce Big Book, White Book, Twelve and Twelve, Step into Action, and 90 Days Meditations, and make agreements on daily reading.
- Discuss importance of prayer, meditation and/or daily quiet time.
- Share the importance of staying connected to others in the program and use of the telephone. Provide member phone list.
- Explain the SA bottom line and what a “slip” is.
- Be clear about termination guidelines, if you have them.
- Agree on how often sponsor and sponsee will meet face to face.

What else may be useful to share with sponsees?

- Provide the sponsee with tools to respond to stressful situations.
- Encourage the sponsee to pray for those who create a stressful or triggering situation.
- Provide direction for the sponsee to begin working on the steps, to find ways to be of service to the fellowship, and the benefits of making a gratitude list each day.
- Avoid becoming an authority figure. Seek to create the relationship of being a partner with a brother or sister, as you both walk together on the journey of sobriety, recovery, and a better life.
- Use terms like, “I suggest you,” or “You might try”, rather than, “You must do” “You should do” or, “You will do.”
- Return sponsee’s calls as quickly as possible.
- When sponsee calls, listen carefully. Be present. Avoid being distracted by watching television or working on the computer while talking to a sponsee by phone.
- Go “dutch” for food when sponsor and sponsee meet for meals or coffee/tea.
- Provide guidance and feedback on each Step as the sponsee works through the Twelve Steps.
- Share non-judgemental feedback on how the sponsee is responding to challenges, temptations, triggers, etc. Use the opportunity to practice compassion and forgiveness for others.
- Encourage and commend sponsee for successes. Reframe “failures” to help the sponsee see progress and opportunities for growth.
- Encourage the sponsee to attend at least one meeting that the sponsor attends, so that there can be regular contact before or after meetings.
- Pray for your sponsees. Be sincerely interested in their life—not just the addiction part of their lives.

What are practices sponsors would be wise to avoid?

- Shaming, judging or demeaning sponsee for anything.
- Setting phone call times that sponsee does not agree to. In other words, having no one-sided agreements.

- Giving advice, especially advice that you don't follow yourself.
- Being prideful of the number of sponsees you are working with.
- Sharing the names of those whom you sponsor with other sponsees. You may talk over issues you're having with sponsees with your own sponsor, however, for learning and feedback.
- Taking on more sponsees than you can really work with successfully. The key is quality, not quantity.
- Don't become therapist or problem solver for sponsee. The magic of the program is in working the steps. Focus on the steps.

Is this the final word on sponsorship?

Those of us who have had a hand in creating this document understand that it is only a starting point and that it must be updated and amended on a regular basis. It is the hope of the group that put this initial draft together that it will be useful to those who are now serving as sponsors and be instructive to those who are considering becoming sponsors.

What is Sexaholics Anonymous?

Sexaholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober. There are no dues or fees for SA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

SA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sexually sober and help others to achieve sexual sobriety.

Sexaholics Anonymous is a recovery program based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous and received permission from AA to use its Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in 1979.

There are meetings in Cameron Park, Carmichael, Carson City, Davis, Elk Grove, Folsom, Fresno, Manteca, Modesto, Reno, Roseville, Sacramento, and Stockton.

The FIRST STEP to joining Sexaholics Anonymous is to attend a newcomer's meeting.

For more information or to contact us go to: **SaSacramento.org**