

## Ideas & Resources to Make AA Meetings More Accessible to All



*from the Accessibilities Committee*

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**Understand that reading aloud is stressful for some.** Anxiety, dyslexia, and other issues can make reading difficult.

- 💡 Consider announcing, “Reading aloud isn’t for everyone. If you don’t wish to read, simply say ‘pass.’ You can still share later.”

**Include those with low vision and visual impairments.**

- 💡 Meetings can obtain Large-print copies of the *Big Book* and the 12 and 12 for meetings.

**Make room for anxiety, especially with newcomers.** Most disabilities are invisible, and anxiety can be high in AA meetings.


- 💡 Sharing can be voluntary, rather than required. If you’re going around the circle or room, be clear that people can “pass.”
- 💡 In our zeal to speak with newcomers, we may overwhelm them. It can be helpful to ask: “Can I speak to you for a moment?”

**Assess physical access for wheelchairs and walkers.** Review the meeting list and see if your meeting is listed as “Wheelchair Accessible.”




- 💡 A start is making sure that doorways, including the bathroom, are at least 36 inches wide. Disabled parking is also helpful. (More details are in the AA Accessibilities Checklist for Meetings and Groups.)


This committee needs members to keep going, and we meet monthly on Zoom. Please contact the Accessibilities Committee to join: [accessibility@asantacruz.org](mailto:accessibility@asantacruz.org).

**Discuss if your meeting is child-friendly.** The meaning of “child-friendly” is determined by individual groups, so this requires a conversation. Issues to consider:

- What age of children are welcome?
- Can parents/guardians bring multiple children?
- If babies are welcome, is some noise and crying tolerable, or are parents/guardians expected to step-out?
- Are children encouraged or required to wear headphones? (If so, are they provided?)
-  - Are attendees expected to minimize swearing and/or non-child content?
- If an adjoining room is available, how old should children be to use it unsupervised?
- If desired, a child-friendly meeting can have a “rotation” system where attendees supervise children in another room. If a babysitter is hired, consult with the Central Office regarding liability issues.
- If your meeting is child-friendly, consider announcing what parents/guardians can expect.

**In online and hybrid meetings, turn on captions.** This helps online and in-person attendees follow along. You can turn them on as host and/or request them as an attendee.

 In the toolbar at the bottom of Zoom, click the **captions** icon . If you don't see it, click the **More** icon  first.

If desired, hover over the captions and click the gear icon  and then click on caption language (to change to Spanish, if option is available) or caption settings (to change font type, size, etc.).

## Recognize that many people are hard of hearing and/or deaf.



For those who are hard of hearing (or lip-read), keep the room well-lit and turn toward the person when speaking. In larger meetings, use supplied microphones.



Direct ASL interpretation and closed captioning requests to the Central Office at 831-475-5782 or [info@asantacruz.org](mailto:info@asantacruz.org). (At this point, lead time is needed to arrange ASL interpreters.) Note that auto-captioning (via Zoom, etc.) can be useful but aren't a substitute for ASL interpretation or captioning.

**Be aware of Spanish options.** The Meeting Guide lists many meetings in Spanish. Also, the Santa Cruz AA website can be translated to Spanish - click on the flag at the top!



**Know that there are LGBTQ meetings in Santa Cruz.** The Meeting Guide lists these meetings, and there is LGBTQ Alcoholics in AA pamphlet.



**Support service dogs by asking all dogs to be leashed.** This helps working dogs focus on their work.

## Ask for feedback. Progress not perfection!



You might ask: "If you have any concerns with accessibility, please bring these to the business meeting." If issues come up that you can't resolve, reach out to [accessibility@asantacruz.org](mailto:accessibility@asantacruz.org).

**Reach out to 988 when someone is in crisis and you need help.** 988 is also available via text: <https://chat.988lifeline.org/>. Reach out for you or someone else! The Santa Cruz National Association for Mental Illness (NAMI) also provides excellent resources.



## Accessibility Resources from AA

**Accessibilities  
WORKBOOK**

AA Accessibilities Workshop (34 pages)  
<https://www.aa.org/accessibilities-workbook>

**ACCESS TO A.A.**  
MEMBERS SHARE  
ON OVERCOMING  
BARRIERS

Access to AA pamphlet (story-based)  
<https://www.aa.org/access-aa-members-share-overcoming-barriers>

**A.A. Guidelines on Accessibility**

AA for Alcoholics: Accessibility for All Alcoholics  
<https://www.aa.org/aa-guidelines-accessibility-all-alcoholics>

**A.A.** for  
Alcoholics with  
Mental Health  
Issues

AA for Alcoholics with Mental Health Issues  
<https://www.aa.org/aa-alcoholics-mental-health-issues-and-their-sponsors>

**Sharing the A.A. Message with  
the Alcoholic Who Is Deaf  
or Hard-of Hearing**

The Alcoholic Who is Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing  
[https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/mg-13\\_carryingtheaa.pdf](https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/mg-13_carryingtheaa.pdf)

LGBTQ  
Alcoholics  
in **A.A.**

LGBTQ Alcoholics in AA  
<https://www.aa.org/lgbtq-alcoholics-aa>

**ALCOHÓLICOS  
ANÓNIMOS**

find AA books in Spanish:  
<https://onlineliterature.aa.org/products/>

**Black  
in A.A.**

Black in AA  
<https://www.aa.org/black-aa-experience-strength-and-hope>