

## **STARTING A NEW FA GROUP FAQs**

**WHO CAN START A GROUP?** It takes only one concerned person to found a new FA group. In fact, many people who have started FA groups have never had prior Twelve Step program experience.

The only things needed to start a group are a regular place to meet; a copy of FA's *Suggested Meeting Format with Basic Readings* (#5003); some additional pieces of FA literature to be sold to attendees and used during meetings; and a few potential members.

The *Suggested Meeting Format with Basic Readings*, along with other FA literature (especially *Introduction to an FA Meeting* [#7016]), should answer most of your questions. You may also find it helpful to visit a few Al-Anon or Nar-Anon meetings, since those groups' programs and meeting structures are similar to FA's.

### **WHERE MIGHT I FIND A SUITABLE MEETING PLACE?**

Suggested meeting places include schools, places of worship, addiction treatment facilities ("rehab"), hospitals, public buildings, and retirement homes. The building where you meet should be well lit, easy to find, and in a central location. The building manager should understand the nature and purpose of the FA program as well as the fact that our 1½-hour meetings are traditionally held weekly, including holidays.

### **HOW MUCH SHOULD A MEETING ROOM COST?**

Your search for a meeting room will probably lead you to a community-spirited person or facility that might offer a room at little or no cost. If there is no set fee, you should explain that, in accordance with our Seventh Tradition (i.e., "every group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions"), the group would like to make a small contribution toward the use of the room. (Later, once your group becomes established, your members might consider increasing the amount of your contribution.)

**HOW DO WE FINANCE THE GROUP?** The group is financed by "passing the basket" at each meeting. These voluntary donations are used to pay for rent, refreshments, and FA literature. If donations eventually exceed your group's needs, they can be contributed to your local Intergroup or National Service Board (if any) or to the World Service Office (WSO).

**WHAT FA LITERATURE WILL WE NEED?** FA offers a wide variety of recovery literature. The full catalog is on our website at [www.familiesanonymous.org](http://www.familiesanonymous.org). You can purchase FA literature online, or you can fill out a hardcopy order form and mail it to the World Service Office. A new group should purchase the *New Group Pack* (#8001CD), which contains one copy of each literature item and all materials that your new group will need for holding meetings. If your group has limited financial resources and cannot afford the New Group Pack at this time, please contact our Group Outreach Committee at [go@familiesanonymous.org](mailto:go@familiesanonymous.org) and we will try to assist.

**WHAT ABOUT OTHER SUPPLIES?** You may wish to provide light refreshments, a clock, a collection basket, and legible signs directing newcomers to your meeting room. All supplies used for the meeting (such as coffee, water, cream, sugar, disposable cups, spoons, napkins, etc.) can be paid for out of group funds.

**HOW IS THE MEETING CONDUCTED?** The *Suggested Meeting Format with Basic Readings* makes it easy to lead a meeting. Chairs are typically arranged in a circle or other configuration that enables easy communication among members. The meeting's leader (a different person each week) usually selects a specific topic for discussion. The topic may be one of the Twelve Steps or Twelve Traditions; the Serenity Prayer; an FA slogan; or a key word or phrase, such as "release with love" or "acceptance." A meeting topic can also be selected from the index of *Today A Better Way* (#1015); from one of FA's five "basic readings"; or from another piece of FA literature.

At some meetings, the discussion may proceed around the room, with each person having a chance to speak in turn. At other

meetings, members wanting to speak, make comments, or ask questions may raise their hands and wait to be recognized by the meeting's leader. Regardless of which method is used, participation in discussions is strictly voluntary. The leader's role is to encourage participation by all who wish to speak, while ensuring that everyone follows the group's particular understanding of *Crosstalk*. Members take turns leading the meetings from week to week, so as to avoid having any one member control the group.

**WHAT MAKES A “GOOD MEETING”?** Members make a meeting “good” by being willing to share their personal progress, shortcomings, or overreactions in daily-life situations. In this program, we help each other—not by giving advice or criticism or by endless discussion of our problems, but rather by honestly sharing our own experiences, strengths, and hopes.

**HOW DO WE ENCOURAGE NEWCOMERS TO “KEEP COMING BACK”?** It is FA members' compassion and interest in each other that allow newcomers to sense that they will be understood and supported as they work on their recovery. One member (usually the group secretary) can be responsible for providing newcomers with a sampling of literature that introduces them to FA but does not overwhelm them with too much information at the outset. Literature selections often come from this list: *Basic Pamphlet* (#1001), *An Open Letter to My Family* (#2007), *Letter to the Newcomer* (#6001), *To the Concerned Family Member or Friend* (#6003), *Do You Need FA? (Twenty Questions)* (#6004), *A New Door Opens* (#6005), and/or one or more of the FA bookmarks, all perhaps placed in the *Welcome!* folder (#6002). Providing newcomers with a list of members' first names and phone numbers, or suggesting particular pieces of literature that they might find meaningful, are other ways to help newcomers feel welcome. Some groups choose to distribute pamphlets at no charge; others may announce, as the basket is being passed, that newcomers are the group's guests at their first meeting.

**WHAT IS THE FAMILIES ANONYMOUS WORLD SERVICE OFFICE (WSO)?** The WSO is the worldwide headquarters of Families Anonymous, Inc. Our office is supported entirely by

donations from our member groups and by proceeds from the sale of FA literature. The office serves all Families Anonymous groups—domestic and international—and carries the message of our program to people everywhere who are concerned about the use of mind-altering substances or related behavioral problems of a relative or friend.

**HOW DO WE REGISTER OUR GROUP?** As soon as you have obtained a meeting place and decided on a day and time for your meetings, you have enough information to register your new group with the WSO. There are two ways to register. You may fill out the Group Registration Form that came with your New Group Pack and mail or fax it to the WSO, or you may register online by going to our website, clicking on “Group Registration” on the homepage, and filling in and submitting the on-screen form.

By registering your group with the WSO, your meeting will be added to FA's online and printed meeting directories, and you will receive important information about the fellowship, have opportunities for service and decision-making within the organization, and be sent a complimentary copy of our bimonthly newsletter, *The Twelve Step Rag*. By re-registering your group annually, and by informing the WSO in the interim of any changes regarding your meeting day, time, location, or contact person, you can ensure that your website information will always remain up to date.

Please note that anonymity (as stated in our Twelfth Tradition) is the spiritual foundation of our program. Your personal information will not be used outside the WSO, nor will it be given or sold to any outside organization.

**DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?** If so, or if you are puzzled about something you've read, the FA Group Outreach Committee will be happy to assist. The Group Outreach Committee may be reached by email at [go@familiesanonymous.org](mailto:go@familiesanonymous.org) or by contacting the WSO. Remember that there are no foolish questions!

Thank you for your interest in FA. We wish you well.