



Starting a New Families Anonymous® Group



WHO CAN START A GROUP?

It takes only one concerned person to establish a new Families Anonymous® (FA®) group. In fact, many people who start FA groups have no prior Twelve Step program experience.

The only things needed to start a group are:

- a physical location or online platform for meeting regularly;
- a *Starter Kit* (#8003) containing basic materials for starting a new group (free upon request from FA's World Service Office [WSO]);
- a copy of *Suggested Meeting Format with Basic Readings* (#5003) or *Suggested Meeting Format with Basic Readings for Virtual Meetings* (#5003V) (free in the *Starter Kit* or by downloading from the FA website);
- some additional FA literature pieces to use during your meetings and possibly sell or give to attendees; and
- a few potential members.

#5003 or #5003V, along with other FA literature—especially *FA Fact Sheet* (#7012) and *Introduction and Welcome to an FA Meeting* (#7016)—should answer most of your questions.

[Note: Many of the publications named herein are also available in Spanish. For a complete listing, please refer to the “en Español” section of FA’s literature catalog.]

If you have never attended an FA meeting and have no FA groups nearby, you may find it helpful to visit an Al-Anon or Nar-Anon meeting, since those fellowships’ programs and meeting structures are similar to FA’s.

WHERE MIGHT I FIND A SUITABLE MEETING PLACE?

For face-to-face meetings, suggested locations 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 be told the nature and purpose of the FA program as well as the fact that our 1½- to 2-hour meetings are traditionally held weekly, including holidays. Some venues are willing to designate a locked closet where your group can store literature and supplies between meetings; otherwise, your group secretary might need to use a suitcase-on-wheels to transport those items to and from your meetings.

Several platforms are available for holding online meetings and phone meetings. As with physical meetings, you should plan for these meetings to last up to 1½ to 2 hours.

HOW MUCH SHOULD A MEETING ROOM COST?

Your search for a face-to-face meeting location 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 fully 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.

Groups that meet online are likewise expected to follow FA’s Seventh Tradition. Sometimes a member will sign up and pay for an online-platform account and then be reimbursed by the group. In other groups, members with their own personal accounts volunteer to set up the meetings and send out invitations; although they incur no additional expenses and do not require reimbursement, the group can “be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions” by sending a predetermined amount to the WSO in lieu of what they would otherwise pay to the online platform.

HOW DO WE FINANCE THE GROUP?

Although no dues or fees are required for membership, FA groups follow the Twelve Step tradition of asking for voluntary donations at each meeting. Donations are used for paying the group’s rent and/or online-platform subscription, for buying refreshments (if meeting face-to-face), and for purchasing FA literature.

Face-to-face groups literally “pass the basket” around the room during their meetings.

Online groups “pass the basket” virtually, with donations being made in various ways as determined by the group. For example, members can mail checks or money orders anonymously, in any amount they choose, to the group’s treasurer; or they can donate directly to the WSO using a credit or debit card or online-payment method.

If your group eventually accumulates more money than needed to meet expenses, you can pass along the excess to your local intergroup or national service board (if any) and/or to the WSO. In this way you will be helping to support the work of those entities in servicing the fellowship.

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. You can purchase literature online through the website’s e-store, or you can fill out a hardcopy order form and mail it to the WSO.

A new group may purchase a *Full Literature Pack* (formerly *New Group Pack*) (#8001), which contains one copy of each literature item as well as the materials your new group will need for holding meetings.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER SUPPLIES?

For face-to-face meetings, you may wish to provide light refreshments (as allowed by the venue management), a clock, a collection basket, and legible signs directing newcomers to your meeting room. All supplies used for the meeting (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* (#5003) and the *Suggested Meeting Format with Basic Readings for Virtual Meetings* (#5003V) make it easy to lead a meeting.

The “meeting 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,” “acceptance,” or “enabling.” 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 face-to-face meetings, chairs are typically arranged in a circle or other configuration that enables easy communication among members. The discussion may proceed around the room, with each person having a chance to speak in turn; or members who want to share, make comments, or ask questions may raise their hands and wait to be recognized by the meeting leader.

At virtual meetings, members generally stay muted unless they are speaking. Depending on the group’s preferences, members might raise their hands into the camera to indicate they would like to speak; or they might wait for a break in the conversation to unmute and ask to speak; or they might be called upon directly by the meeting leader. It is preferable that attendees turn their camera on so as to encourage the sense of community that typically characterizes FA meetings.

Regardless of which method is used, participation in discussions is strictly voluntary. The leader’s role is to proceed according to the agreed-upon meeting format, oversee presentation of the meeting topic, and encourage an orderly participation by any attendee who wishes to share—all while ensuring that everyone follows the group’s particular understanding of *crossstalk*. 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, successes, shortcomings and overreactions in daily-life situations. In this program, we help each other *not* by giving advice, offering criticism, or endlessly discussing our problems, but rather by honestly sharing our own experiences, challenges, 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 (often 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: *Families Anonymous 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?* (#6004), *A New Door Opens* (#6005), and one or more FA bookmarks, all perhaps placed in a *Welcome!* folder (#6002).

In virtual meetings, where handing out literature samples is problematic, newcomers can be directed to the FA website where they can print out selected items from the Free Downloads page or purchase literature through the e-store.

There are additional ways of helping newcomers feel welcome, such as by providing them with a list of members’ first names and phone numbers; suggesting (or handing out, for free) other FA literature that they might find meaningful; and announcing, as the basket is being passed, that at their first meeting they are the group’s guests. For more ideas, refer to *Growing Your FA Group: A Tip List for New and Established Groups** (#5011).

* Also see *Free Downloads on the FA website*.

WHAT IS FA'S WORLD SERVICE OFFICE (WSO)?

The WSO is the worldwide headquarters of Families Anonymous, Inc. **It is supported entirely by donations from our members and member groups and by proceeds from the sale of FA literature.** The WSO serves all FA 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 settled on a physical location or online platform 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 *Starter Kit* or *Full Literature Pack*, and mail or fax it to the WSO; or you may register online by going to our website, selecting Members→Registration→New Group Registration, and filling in and submitting the onscreen form.

By registering your group with the WSO:

- your meeting will be included in FA's meeting directory;
- you will receive important information about the fellowship on a regular basis, including notifications when our bimonthly newsletter, *Serenity Messenger*, is available for download;
- you will find opportunities for service and decision-making within the organization;
- your group will be eligible to vote at FA's annual business meeting; and
- your group will be covered by FA's liability insurance policy.

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 meeting information on the FA website 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 or be given or sold to any outside organization.

DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

If so, or if you are puzzled about something you have read, FA's Group Outreach Committee will be happy to assist. The Group Outreach Committee may be reached by email at 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.

WHAT YOU ARE DOING IS IMPORTANT FOR YOURSELF AS WELL AS FOR OTHERS!

Page 4 of 4

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