FAMILIES ANONYMOUS®

Spread the Word:

Raising Awareness and Planning Public Outreach

A RESOURCE KIT FOR FA® GROUPS

Families Anonymous, Inc.
701 Lee Street, Suite 670
Des Plaines, IL 60016
847.294.5877
FamiliesAnonymous.org
info@FamiliesAnonymous.org

Published by Families Anonymous, Inc.

#7007E Rev 7/2024

©Families Anonymous, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

FAMILIES ANONYMOUS® and the FA® acronym are federally registered trademarks, and the FA logo is a trademark, owned exclusively by Families Anonymous, Inc.

Table of Contents

1 **Introduction**
"Why have I never heard of FA?"
A resource for raising awareness.

2 **Getting Started**
How can I help spread the word?
Where do I begin?

3 **Resources**
What resources are available?
Are they digital? print? free?

4 **Community Outreach**
Looking for a few quick and simple options?

5 **Reaching Out to Professionals**
How can I build awareness of FA?
Who can help?

14 **Social Media & Media Tips**
What role can social media play?
How can the media be helpful?

17 **Growing Your Group**
How do we attract new members?
What helps a group to thrive?

19 **Public Information Committee**
Have questions? Need help?
We are here for you!

Spread the Word
Introduction

We've heard from so many newcomers to Families Anonymous,® "What a wonderful program! How come I've never heard of it before?" or "I wish I had known about FA® sooner." This guide is designed as a resource to walk you through proven ways of spreading the word about the FA fellowship within your community – while staying true to FA's Twelve Traditions. The more we can share what the FA program has done for us, the more we can help destigmatize the disease of substance use disorder, help others in our community, maintain the strength of our individual FA groups, and protect, preserve and grow the fellowship.

In keeping with our Traditions, Families Anonymous is not affiliated with or funded by any other organization. Donations are accepted from within the FA fellowship only.

We need guard with special care the anonymity of our members as well as those of other recovery programs.

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion.

Please reach out to us at
pi@familiesanonymous.org
We are here for you!

Spread the Word
Getting Started

There are many ways to build awareness of Families Anonymous and your local group. First and foremost, people need to know your group exists and how to find your meetings. How might you get the word out? We offer the following resources:

Meeting Announcement Tools

- In-Person & Virtual Meeting Directories
- Press Release for New Groups (WSOF-32)
- Press Release for Existing Groups (WSOF-33)

A good first step would be to put together a Public Information (PI) Kit. The kit could consist of items to be shared electronically, or printed documents (like brochures, pamphlets and contact cards) obtained from the FA website. We offer the following ideas for materials you might include:

Public Information Resources

- Introduction to Families Anonymous (#5003-1AE)
- Helping (#5003-6E)
- To the Concerned Family Member (#6003E)
- Families Anonymous - for Me? (#7003E)
- Are You Torn Apart? (#7009E)
- Are You at Your Wits' End? (#7014E)
- Families Anonymous and the Professional Community (#7010E-Behav, #7010E-Comm, #7010E-Educ, #7010E-Empl, #7010E-Faith, #7010E-Heal and #7010E-Law)
- FA Fact Sheet (#7012E)
- The Twelve Steps of Families Anonymous (#5003-4)
- The Twelve Promises of Families Anonymous (#2011)
- Press Release for New Groups (WSOF-32)
- Press Release for Existing Groups (WSOF-33)

Spread the Word
Resources

Email Templates

Here are links to sample emails you might use to introduce FA's electronic PI materials. Tailor them to fit your situation keeping in mind that a personal touch goes a long way in connecting with recipients as you ask them to share FA with others.

Sample Emails

- Individuals you've met in another setting
- Professionals you know
- Professionals you've never met

Print PI Kit Resources

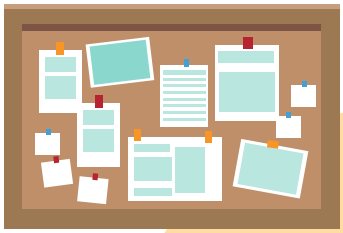
- Meeting Announcement Posters
- Contact Cards
- Brochures, pamphlets and bookmarks available for purchase from the FA website
- Print your own copies of the electronic PI items

Sharing your story and the impact Families Anonymous has had on your recovery is one of the most effective ways to spread the word about FA. Think of all the people and professions that have crossed your path as you navigated someone else's substance use. These are the people who can help build awareness of Families Anonymous and refer people to FA meetings. Let them know how FA has helped you, and ask them to recommend the program to others.

Spread the Word
Community Outreach

Many communities offer opportunities for sharing information about resources available. You may wish to consider some of the following options for raising awareness of FA.

Community Resources



- **Bulletin Boards** - coffee shops, restaurants, gyms, community centers, etc.
- **Newspapers** - free notices for non-profits or free columns highlighting FA meetings as a community resource
- **Directories** - free listings in Chamber of Commerce, city, county and state directories of support services

Tips to Keep in Mind ....

- Remember to obtain permission, if needed, before leaving or posting information.
- Contact Info - offer multiple options to reach your group (phone, email, text), monitor the sources regularly, follow-up in a timely manner and keep your contact details up to date.

In some cases, your chance to share FA may be a brief encounter, a moment in time to offer valuable information. Plan ahead and be ready!

Prepare Your Story Like an "Elevator Pitch"

- Condense your story into less than a minute.
- Offer your first name.
- Share how your concern for someone who struggles with drugs or alcohol led you to Families Anonymous.
- Offer one example of how FA helps you.
- Ask if they would like to learn how to cope with unsolved issues.
- Leave them with contact details to reach you and/or to find an FA meeting.

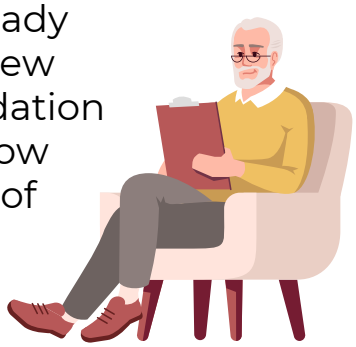
Spread the Word
Reaching Out to Professionals

The Recovery Industry

Behavioral health professionals recognize the family disease component of addiction and endorse Families Anonymous as a valuable resource in addition to their private practice. Professionals view FA groups as partners, not competitors, in the recovery world and frequently recommend their clients attend meetings. When sharing the program with them, it's important they understand that we welcome their cooperation in starting a new group or making referrals to existing groups, but that the responsibility of conducting meetings is shared by the members themselves, without counseling guidance. At times, groups may choose to invite professionals to speak at their meetings. This is an opportunity for FA members to hear from industry professionals and for the professionals to learn more about the FA program. When these speakers attend an FA meeting, they are guests only; they are invited to inform, not give advice, direction or guidance.

Chances are you and your fellow group members have met many people working in the recovery industry as you've struggled with someone else's substance use. These individuals can be an impactful resource for spreading the word about FA.

Your personal connection with these professionals is a valuable resource for raising awareness. Capitalize on connections you've already established. We regularly hear that new members find FA after a recommendation from a therapist or counselor. We know their referrals work - take advantage of this proven resource.



Spread the Word

Recovery Industry Contacts

Consider this list of recovery industry contacts, and add any others that your group might know.

- [ ] Counselors
- [ ] Family Therapists
- [ ] Psychologists
- [ ] Psychiatrists
- [ ] Addiction Specialists
- [ ] Detox Facilities
- [ ] Rehab Centers
- [ ] Intensive Outpatient Programs
- [ ] Sober Living Providers
- [ ] Family Programs within Drug Treatment Centers
- [ ] After Care Programs
- [ ] Sober Companions
- [ ] Medically Assisted Treatment Clinics
- [ ] Other Twelve Step Meetings (AA, CA, NA, etc.)
- [ ] Drug Prevention Groups
- [ ] Recovery Clubhouses
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____

If you feel comfortable, share with them how Families Anonymous has helped you. Ask them to suggest FA to other families. If you are willing, offer to share your FA experience at one of their events ***without divulging anyone else's anonymity unless you have their prior consent.***

Click Here for BEHAVIORAL HEALTH BROCHURE

Spread the Word

Medical Professionals

Consider asking permission to leave Families Anonymous brochures or bookmarks and your meeting information on the waiting room tables and literature racks of medical offices.

- [ ] Doctors
- [ ] Nurses
- [ ] Physician Assistants
- [ ] Nurse Practitioners
- [ ] Pediatricians
- [ ] Other Healthcare Staff
- [ ] Emergency Rooms
- [ ] Clinics
- [ ] Health Departments
- [ ] Local Health Fairs
- [ ] EMTs
- [ ] 911 Dispatchers
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]

Click Here for HEALTHCARE BROCHURE

Has your health been impacted by concern for a loved one? When you meet with medical practitioners, let them know how Families Anonymous has been part of the solution for dealing with stress. Ask them to share FA with other patients.

Spread the Word

Legal Professionals

Communicating with law enforcement and legal professionals in your area can be a productive way to build awareness of Families Anonymous and your meetings. Local police departments often have community liaison staff. Ask to speak with them and get their ideas for sharing FA as a community resource. Encourage them to refer friends and families to FA when they encounter someone who could benefit from the program. Offer to be a point of contact.

If there is a drug court in your community, you may be able to attend a court session as a spectator or establish contact with the judge and the court drug counselor or other staff.

Ideas of legal professionals who may help share information about FA are listed here. Please reach out to these individuals and any others your group may know.

Many counties and states sponsor Awareness Days/Weeks/Months related to substance use disorder and reducing the stigma. Ask to be added to their communication list and participate in the events held.

- [ ] Police Officers
- [ ] Community Liaison Staff
- [ ] Probation Officers
- [ ] Juvenile Officers
- [ ] Sheriff's Department Staff
- [ ] Attorneys
- [ ] Judges
- [ ] Drug Court Personnel
- [ ] Other Court Staff
- [ ] Prison & Jail Personnel
- [ ] National Council on Alcohol & Drug Dependence (NCADD)
- [ ] State & Local Substance Use Organizations
- [ ] Training Officers
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]

Click Here for LAW ENFORCEMENT BROCHURE

Spread the Word

Educators

Helpful contacts in the field of education vary from one organization to the next. The person most helpful is the one who knows the best way to reach principals, school counselors, teachers and other staff who come in contact with struggling students and concerned family members and friends. Knowing that Families Anonymous is available to those concerned about another's use of drugs is a useful resource for school personnel.

Frequently in a position to encourage families to seek help when their children are having problems at school, counselors in charge of drug and alcohol prevention programs are excellent contacts. Providing them with free electronic materials and printed FA handouts will allow them to share FA with families.

- [ ] School Administrators
- [ ] Principals/Vice Principals
- [ ] School Counselors
- [ ] Teachers
- [ ] School Nurses
- [ ] Coaches & Club Leaders
- [ ] Curriculum Designers
- [ ] Drug & Alcohol Prevention Program Staff
- [ ] School Resource Officers
- [ ] Alternative/Recovery High School Personnel
- [ ] PTA Leaders
- [ ] Trade & Technical School Leaders & Staff
- [ ] College & University Counselors
- [ ] Collegiate Recovery Program Staff & Students
- [ ] College & University Deans
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]

Click Here for EDUCATORS BROCHURE

Spread the Word

Some schools may be reluctant to acknowledge the use of drugs by their students, but leaving them with information about FA just in case a concerned parent reaches out looking for help can still spread the word that Families Anonymous is available to those seeking support.

Many school districts cannot legally recommend a particular organization or person to help students, but they often do include Families Anonymous (along with local contact details) on an alphabetized "help list" of resources available to families.

Some districts offer forums or other opportunities for FA members to speak to groups of parents. This is a great way to share Families Anonymous and let people know about your group's meetings.

If you are moved to share your personal journey and the hope you found in FA, this can be a powerful and compelling way to reach other people. ***Remember to respect the anonymity of others if you do not have their consent to share their story.***

Local community colleges, trade and technical schools, and colleges and universities may all be open to making Families Anonymous groups and resources available to concerned parents or students. Some colleges and universities offer Collegiate Recovery Centers for their students. These are excellent places to share FA's Public Information materials and ask about opportunities to present the FA program to staff, students and concerned parents.

Spread the Word

Faith Leaders & Social Workers

Clergy members often allow Twelve Step meetings in their places of worship, and they are in a good position to refer concerned people to Families Anonymous. Sharing the FA program, meeting information and some of our Public Information resources with them is a good way to build awareness of FA's presence and provide these referral sources with the tools they need to help people find and attend an FA meeting.

Similarly, social workers interacting with families and young people are frequently open to information about free help and support for their clients. Contacting them to offer FA's resources is yet another way to spread the word.

- [ ] Clergy of All Faiths
- [ ] Social Workers
- [ ] Child Protective Services Personnel
- [ ] Mentoring Programs
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]

Click Here for **FAITH** LEADERS **BROCHURE**

The Families Anonymous program is open to all, regardless of a person's individual beliefs, or lack of belief. Each member's understanding of a Higher Power is strictly a personal, private choice.

Spread the Word

Employers

Employers can be another good networking source. Larger companies often have employee-assistance programs designed to offer support to employees who are struggling. Ask to have Families Anonymous listed as a free resource and share some of FA's online materials that can be quickly and easily passed along to those who may benefit.

- [ ] Human Resources Staff
- [ ] Employee Benefits Group
- [ ] Employee-Assistance Programs
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]

Click Here for EMPLOYERS BROCHURE

Navigating a friend's or relative's substance use disorder can often feel overwhelming. At times, it can seem next to impossible to focus on anything else – including a job – but the bills must be paid. If you are willing, ask if you can present Families Anonymous at a wellness session. Consider creating a network for employees who are concerned about their own or another's use of drugs. ***Without compromising anyone else's anonymity absent their consent,*** *you can create a safe place to share common workplace struggles that often accompany addiction.*

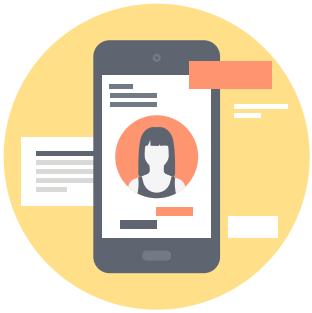
Spread the Word

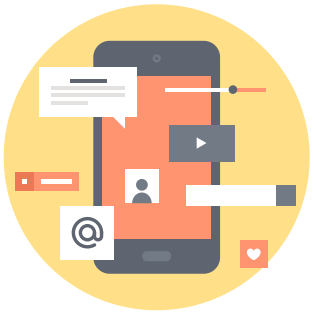
Organizations & Fellowships

Self-help organizations often cooperate with each other, even in the absence of any formal affiliation. These groups may be happy to refer people to Families Anonymous when their fellowships do not offer the help a person seeks. Making them aware of your meeting date and time and providing them with information about FA's program can grow awareness for the help we offer.

- [ ] Other Twelve Step Fellowships
- [ ] Open Twelve Step Meetings
- [ ] Y Groups
- [ ] Shelters & Community Assistance Groups with Recovery Programs
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]
- [ ]

Click Here for COMMUNITY LEADERS BROCHURE





Spread the Word
Using Social Media

The days of posting notes on a newspaper's free community pages are almost gone in today's rapidly changing media world. But the growing number of social media platforms – including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube – offers new options to spread the word of recovery to family members, friends and loved ones of those living in long-term recovery or still struggling. We offer the following to get you started:

- Refer people to FA's Facebook page.
- Share meditations or posts from FA's official page to your own social media accounts.
- "Share" and "like" FA's social media posts.
- Create social media accounts for your local community (with the anonymity of members protected) - this can grow your group.
- Post the time and place (in-person or hybrid) or online links (virtual) for your meetings.
- Post an email, phone number or the FA website where more information can be obtained.
- Community websites like Nextdoor and some online neighborhood newspapers still offer space for free postings of community events.
- Monitor all social media for objectionable comments, and delete unwanted postings.
- Direct questions to the Families Anonymous Public Information (PI) Committee.

It's important when sharing information about Families Anonymous and FA meetings to protect the anonymity of those in our community. But it's fair and often helpful to share elements of your own journey and address what FA has meant for you.

Spread the Word
Working with the Media

Your story is meaningful and your story matters. There is great benefit in sharing your journey so that others may learn of Families Anonymous and the support and healing found within FA's meetings. No one should have to struggle alone, and the media can be a useful outlet for building awareness of FA's program. Keep in mind, it should be made clear that FA members speak for themselves and not on behalf of Families Anonymous. We offer the following tips to help you effectively work with the media.

- It's human nature to have built-in biases about a subject until being educated about it. When dealing with the media, view yourself as an educator, not a lecturer. Put aside any preconceived ideas you may have about the media.

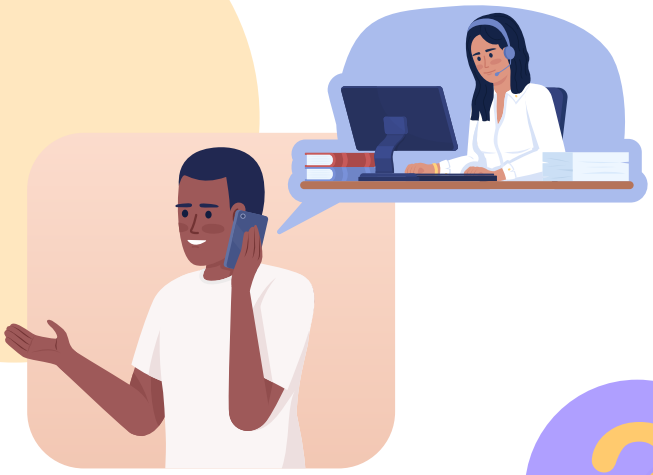
- Do not prejudge the media person across from you. The vast majority of people in the media want to get the story right and want a good story to tell. Those two things are not necessarily in conflict with each other.

- Every FA member has "good" stories. They may not include good memories, but they are stories that would rivet an audience and come with important lessons and messaging. Most media members seek to tell important stories by personalizing them. So it's important to be as open, honest and detailed as you feel comfortable being, ***while always protecting the anonymity of others***. Your words can help other people.

Spread the Word

- Think about what you have learned on your own recovery journey about substance use disorder, mental health in general and the concept of the family disease. How does your knowledge today differ from where you were at the start? For most, it's a 180-degree turn. Consider that the media member might be where you were at the beginning, similar to someone who is walking into their first FA meeting.

- If you believe the person across from you is not listening to what you're saying, there is nothing wrong with ending the interview and saying simply, "I don't believe this is going to work." Be honest with your thoughts, but don't be rude. If the person insists on continuing but you're not comfortable, you can refer them to someone else.



- Avoid discussion of outside issues and politics. For example, if someone asks your thoughts on the legalization of marijuana or other substances, a good answer might be, "I have no control over that. My focus is family recovery."

Questions? *- If you have questions, please contact the PI committee.*

PI@familiesanonymous.org

Spread the Word
Growing Your Group

Welcoming the Newcomer

Offering a friendly greeting goes a long way in helping a person who is new to FA. Remember back to your first time. It takes courage to show up at a meeting when life seems to be falling apart. Some other ideas for encouraging new members include:

- Invite newcomers to sit with you.
- Offer a welcome packet.
- Collect their contact information.
- Share the group's contact list of people who are willing to take calls or emails outside of meetings.
- Assign a "greeter" to follow up within a few days - check in and answer any questions a newcomer might have.
- Spend time with newcomers at the end of the meeting. Briefly share a bit of your story (without focusing on the one who brought you to FA) and how FA has helped you. Ask if they'd like to talk about their reason for attending.
- If your meetings are virtual, assign "greeters" to stay on afterwards to meet with newer members in a smaller format.
- Share a favorite reading or other FA resource that speaks to you.
- If a newcomer is struggling with a certain topic, suggest a specific piece of FA literature or bookmark.

Spread the Word

Planning for Success & Sustainability

Once the word is out and your group is underway, proven strategies for success are available. Sharing responsibilities and keeping members engaged is important to the group's sustainability. Best-practices and suggestions shared by some of our seasoned groups are offered below.

- **Take turns** leading the meetings.
- **Focus** a meeting on **one of the Twelve Steps** each month.
- Address **core recovery topics** (boundaries, denial, fear, enabling, letting go, resentment, etc.).
- Encourage **sponsorship** and working the steps.
- **Share FA news** sent to Group Secretaries.
- Send a weekly email to your group with:
    - Link to online access and/or a reminder of the meeting date, time and location
    - Sign-up list for meeting leaders, online hosts, greeters, etc.
    - Notices of current events such as free FA workshops, conventions, book discussions, local recovery activities, etc.
    - Links to free resources like the Serenity Messenger (FA newsletter) and FA Event Recordings
- **Invite members to share the weekly email** and meeting details with recovery contacts and others who could benefit from FA.
- **Build relationships** with each other outside the meetings. Our program is so much more than a weekly meeting.
- Create a **contact list.** Use it to call another member when you feel the need for support.

Spread the Word

Families Anonymous Public Information (PI) Committee

We are here for you!

The World Service Board of Families Anonymous has a Public Information (PI) Committee whose members are available for assistance or guidance in spreading the word about FA. If you have questions or need help, please reach out. We are here for you!

Free electronic resources are available as well as materials published by Families Anonymous and sold in our online bookstore.

We are happy to offer suggestions and help you design an awareness campaign that works for your group.

We encourage you to network with other FA members. Groups have had success with newspaper articles, email campaigns, speaking engagements and presentations to employee groups. If you would like to gain from their experience, please let us know, and we'll help you get in contact.

pi@FamiliesAnonymous.org

Embracing Step Twelve: *Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these Steps, we tried to* ***carry this message to others*** *and practice these principles in all our affairs.*

Thank You

Thank you for your interest in spreading the word, and thank you for your service to the fellowship. We couldn't do it without you!

Related Resources

Families Anonymous offers a wide assortment of helpful resources. Highlighted below are a few that coordinate well with Spreading the Word and Raising Awareness.

Starting a New Group

Useful information from our website

New Group Starter Kit (#8003E)

Growing Your FA Group

A tip list for new and established groups (#5011)

Meeting Location Signs

NEW! Free download signs to help people find your group (#5015)

Raising Awareness Workshop

Recording from the Online Session

Families Anonymous Email List

Sign up to learn of new releases and event offerings

Families Anonymous®

Follow Us on Social Media

Facebook.com/familiesanonymousofficial

Instagram.com/familiesanonymousofficial

Stay Current

Free Newsletter

Email Updates

Order Recovery Resources

Online Bookstore

Look Around Our Website

E-Resources & Other Info

Attend a Workshop

Workshops & Education

Past Session Recordings

Families Anonymous, Inc.
701 Lee Street, Suite 670
Des Plaines, IL 60016
847.294.5877
FamiliesAnonymous.org
info@FamiliesAnonymous.org

#7007E