

PPG-09

**Families Anonymous, Inc. (FA)
WSO (World Service Office)
Telephone Policy**



Adopted by the World Service Board January 21, 2012
Reviewed February 20, 2025
Next Review February 20, 2030

INTRODUCTION

When someone is hurting and reaches out for help, it is important for the hands and hearts of FA to serve and assist in offering hope to those in desperation.

You are performing a very important service when handling the many and varied phone calls that reach FA from throughout the world. Without you, the word would not get out to the hurting members in our communities.

Although this policy is intended for staff and volunteers at the WSO, it can serve as a guideline for other FA volunteers, such as Group Secretaries and Group Contacts, who often interact with individuals on the phone.

Following are procedures that you should follow when receiving calls on behalf of Families Anonymous.

How the process works

The WSO has two telephone numbers:

Des Plaines, IL office number is **847-294-5877**

800 Service Number is **800-736-9805**

(These numbers are posted on the website at familiesanonymous.org.)

1. TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION – GENERAL

- 1.1. Families Anonymous receives many unusual calls, and staff and volunteers who answer the calls often need guidance as to how to respond. It is the intention of the Board of Directors that this policy will answer any questions that may arise, inform anyone who takes calls of his/her responsibilities, and alert you of instances where caution should be taken. Remember, **you represent FA each time you answer a call.** The public perceives FA by how you conduct yourself on the phone and how you treat the caller.
- 1.2. Please remember that answering calls as an FA staff member or volunteer is an important commitment.
- 1.3. We can't stress this enough! Be sensitive to the person who is calling, and avoid leaving him/her on hold. This is extremely important for the caller who might be put on hold too long, then gives up and decides to hang up. **Always remember, when someone is calling it is often because there is an immediate need or crisis. You are his or her lifeline to hope.**
- 1.4. One of the requirements for volunteers is that you are an "*active member of FA,*" which means it is very important that you are attending meetings regularly.
- 1.5. Calls from *seriously impaired* individuals (i.e., a threatened suicide) are outside the scope of the FA program and not our responsibility. Personal advice must be avoided. FA representatives are not trained to handle calls of this nature. Remember you are representing FA and not yourself.

2. PROCEDURE FOR AN INCOMING CALL

- 2.1. A copy of this Telephone Policy should be reviewed by the call taker prior to volunteering and should be readily accessible as a reference.
- 2.2. When an “inquiry call” comes into the WSO, the FA call taker answers the phone with the following greeting: **“Thank you for calling Families Anonymous; how may I help you?”**
- 2.3. If the caller is requesting meeting information (e.g., times, locations, etc.), the FA call taker gives him/her the requested information. Callers may be referred to the group contact for the group closest to them.
- 2.4. The FA call taker may give a brief overview of FA’s Twelve Step program and, if appropriate, share personal experiences when the caller requests information about the FA program. Keep in mind that the call taker is not there to give advice.
- 2.5. The FA call taker should suggest that the caller visit the FA website (**familiesanonymous.org**) for additional information about the program.
- 2.6. The FA call taker may find it necessary to get the caller’s phone number and then check with someone else first if he or she is unsure of any information.
- 2.7. Each FA call taker should be certain that all information given to the caller is accurate. It is better to give no information than to give incorrect information.
- 2.8. Because it is important to keep the phone line open to others in need, the FA call taker should keep the calls fairly brief.

3. PROCEDURE FOR CRISIS CALLS

- 3.1. If the FA call taker receives a call where someone is threatening suicide or is in a state of mind that is difficult to handle, this must be taken seriously. **For liability purposes, all threats of suicide must be taken as real.**
- 3.2. Anyone receiving a suicide threat call and having a phone number from the caller ID should call **911** on another line immediately. **911** will instruct you what to do. You can direct the caller to dial **911** also.
- 3.3. Should the FA call taker feel he or she is unable to handle the call, request the person's first name and phone number and inform the caller that someone will call back. Then call a seasoned FA member and request his or her assistance with the call.
- 3.4. If the caller is in crisis and not threatening suicide, the call taker should continue to talk to the caller. If you are disconnected, **call trace by dialing *57 from the same line, prior to making another call.**
- 3.5. At all times you should maintain the dignity of FA. It is important that you be courteous and never slam down the receiver. You need not respond to or accept abuse, but you can always thank the caller and calmly hang up.

4. WHAT NOT TO DO

- 4.1. Never give out telephone numbers, names or addresses of our call takers and callers without their permission. Simply state it is FA's policy not to divulge this information.
- 4.2. It is not FA's policy to provide individual counseling, nor to give professional referrals, hospital referrals, treatment referrals, or advice. (Regardless of personal training, an FA call taker is not acting as a doctor, psychiatrist, drug counselor, or marriage counselor.)
- 4.3. Do not divulge your name.
- 4.4. Avoid discussions of calls at meetings and elsewhere.