



Families Anonymous



SPONSORSHIP GUIDELINES:

Information & Strategies for Encouraging Sponsorship for Members and Groups

I.

GETTING READY

Families Anonymous® (FA®) publishes an extensive catalog of literature, all written and created by FA. Several of these literature offerings contain practical, historical and action-oriented information about sponsorship.

This material has proven invaluable to both FA groups and individual FA members for many years: the former as they plan and conduct sponsorship meetings and Step meetings; the latter as they delve more deeply into FA's program and principles along their path of recovery.

As you continue reading *Sponsorship Guidelines*, you will see references to sections in these other publications. If they are not already part of your FA literature library, we encourage you to order copies (through the World Service Office or the website's e-store) and use them to help yourself and your group develop a greater understanding and appreciation of sponsorship.

The most necessary of these publications is:

- ***Families Anonymous and Sponsorship*** (#1020) – A booklet that describes the ins and outs of sponsorship, the purpose of sponsorship in FA, and the roles and responsibilities of sponsors and sponsees.

Other useful publications referenced herein are:

- ***The Families Anonymous Tools of Recovery*** (#5001) – A handbook that guides members in developing new thinking patterns and modifying their actions and reactions. Includes sections that explore sponsorship ("The Tenth Tool"), use of the telephone ("The Fifth Tool"), and tips for leading topic meetings on sponsorship.
- ***Today A Better Way***™ (#1015) – FA's member-written daily-thought book that includes readings on sponsorship.
- ***The Twelve Step Workbook*** (#1019) – Includes and expands upon the contents of *The Twelve Steps of Families Anonymous* (#1004), with a wealth of challenging exercises (best done with a sponsor) that encourage self-assessment, inspire us to recognize our positive attributes, and promote our recovery.
- ***The Twelve Traditions in Action*** (#5010) – A section on sponsorship is just one part of this book's in-depth exploration of FA's Traditions and their importance in maintaining and growing our groups and the fellowship.

II. CLARIFYING SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship is an effective recovery tool widely used in Families Anonymous and other Twelve Step programs. It traditionally pairs a sponsor, who has experience in actively working the Steps, with a sponsee, who may be a relative newcomer to the program.

In *Families Anonymous and Sponsorship*, refer to:
“Purpose”
“Why is Sponsorship Important?”

In *The Twelve Traditions in Action*, refer to:
“Sponsorship” in the Tradition Eight chapter

Sponsorship has a long and proven tradition in FA. Over the years, many members have shared and written about the benefits of sponsorship and how being sponsors and sponsees have aided them in their own recovery.

In *Today A Better Way*, refer to:
“Sponsors” in the Index

III. ENCOURAGING SPONSORSHIP IN MEETINGS

A. TOPIC MEETINGS: For Understanding the Concept of Sponsorship

Topic meetings are an ideal way to introduce and reinforce the concept of sponsorship. Consult the following for help in selecting discussion topics and leading sponsorship meetings.

In *Families Anonymous and Sponsorship*, refer to:
“Defining Sponsorship, Sponsor and Sponsee”

In *The FA Tools of Recovery*, refer to:
“Topic Meetings Using Sponsorship”
“Sponsorship – The Tenth Tool”

B. STEP MEETINGS: For Appreciating the Benefits of Sponsorship

Step meetings and sponsorship go hand in hand. Regardless of whether a group focuses most or all of its meetings on a weekly sequential study of the Steps, or devotes just one meeting each month to a particular Step (for example, Step One at a January meeting, Step Two at a February meeting, and so on throughout the year), it is giving its members an opportunity to find commonality with one another's experiences and to appreciate the wisdom of longtime members. This can motivate newer members to embark on a sponsorship relationship that can help them probe more deeply into themselves and move forward in their own recovery.

For example, during a Step Five meeting, the meeting leader might begin by asking if anyone has worked Step Five with a sponsor and, if so, wishes to share some thoughts about it. The discussion can then be expanded by inviting comments from the rest of the group.

In *Today A Better Way*, refer to:
“Step Five” in the Index

Alternatively, if it appears that no one has had experience with sponsorship, the leader might guide the group in reading and discussing more about sponsorship in general.

In *Families Anonymous and Sponsorship*, refer to:
“The Value of Sponsorship”

IV. CREATING PERSONAL CONNECTIONS THAT CAN LEAD TO SPONSORSHIP

A. GREETING NEWCOMERS

Sponsorship can be fostered, and meeting attendance can be encouraged, when newcomers are greeted personally and welcomed warmly to the meeting. Personal connections established from the outset can become deeper and richer over time.

Tools to Use When Greeting Newcomers:

- *Welcome!* folder (#6002) – A folder with pockets into which a group can insert FA materials it considers most relevant for new members. These materials typically include the group’s telephone list and selected FA literature that the group purchases through FA’s literature catalog or downloads for free from the FA website.
- *Greeter/Contact Card* (#6006) – A business-sized card with space to write a member’s first name and telephone number.

Greeters at In-Person Meetings:

A member serving as the “greeter” at that week’s meeting welcomes newcomers to the meeting in a reassuring way that helps them feel both comfortable and unobtrusive. Depending on the group’s preference, the greeter can provide the newcomer with a personalized *Greeter/Contact Card* (#6006) and/or a *Welcome!* folder (#6002).

Greeters at Virtual Meetings:

At the start of a virtual meeting, the group secretary or meeting leader similarly acknowledges newcomers in a welcoming way, encouraging them to listen and inviting them to share only when they are ready. Depending on the group’s preference and the contents of its treasury, the secretary or leader can also mention the *Welcome!* folder (#6002), describe its contents, and ask newcomers if they would like a folder mailed to them; if they would, the secretary or leader can arrange for the newcomer to furnish an address.

B. FOLLOWING UP WITH NEWCOMERS: Deepening Our Personal Connections

A personal phone call to the newcomer, made in the days following the meeting, would show the group’s concern for that person’s well-being and state of mind. It can also be another step toward creating a personal connection that might inspire the newcomer to return—and, it is hoped, to eventually choose a sponsor. The follow-up phone call could be initiated by the greeter, the meeting leader, or another experienced member of the group.

Protecting the newcomer's confidentiality is an essential consideration when making follow-up phone calls. Since the caller most likely does not know the newcomer's home situation (such as who else might be privy to incoming calls and voice messages), the caller can self-identify by first name only and can say, for example, *We met Monday evening*, rather than mention FA specifically. Confirming ahead of time, at the meeting, that the newcomer is amenable to receiving a phone call might also be a good idea; the intention is to avoid being invasive or putting the newcomer on the spot.

The caller can use the following tips to keep the conversation moving along productively:

- Explain in a friendly way that the call is to touch base and see how the newcomer is doing.
- Ask if anything was shared at the meeting that the person identified with.
- Ask, *What did you think the meeting would be like? Was it what you expected?* This could be a good opportunity to allay any concerns the newcomer might have and to gain some important information that the group would benefit from hearing.
- Relate your own first meeting experience (if relevant).
- Tell what you heard at your first meeting that you wanted to know more about (if relevant).
- Encourage the newcomer to make a six-week commitment to attend meetings before deciding if the program is "the right fit."

C. MAKING USE OF THE TELEPHONE LIST: A Multifaceted Recovery Tool

The group's telephone list is an invaluable tool for:

- fostering group bonding and unity
- supporting personal recovery
- connecting potential sponsors and sponsees

In *The FA Tools of Recovery*, refer to:
"Telephone – The Fifth Tool"

Members often find themselves wanting to reach out to each other between meetings. Perhaps they are seeking a sympathetic ear for the challenges and crises they are facing; or maybe they are looking for a sounding board as they work on applying the program's principles in their daily lives. They may start by calling the same two or three people, then calling one person more than others; eventually they may decide to ask that one person to be their sponsor.

The telephone list gives members a handy tool for reaching out. Telephone lists traditionally contain members' first names and phone numbers, which attendees are asked to provide when they sign in at each meeting. In today's modern-communications era, cell phone numbers work well for keeping phone conversations personal and private. Some groups also ask for email addresses, which can be useful for letting members into virtual meetings, sending reminders about special meetings (such as business meetings), forwarding fellowship information (such as the *Serenity Messenger* newsletter), and informing members about special happenings affecting the group.

Some groups include every member on their phone list. Others provide contact information only for longtime members willing to receive phone calls and possibly be sponsors. Mentioning the phone list at every meeting is important; otherwise, some members may be hesitant to "bother" others.

Copies of the telephone list can be provided in various ways:

- by setting them out on the meeting table each week at in-person meetings
- by placing them in the *Welcome!* folder (#6002), as described above
- by emailing them to attendees who have agreed to receive email communications
- by posting them on the Chat link at the virtual meeting site
- by distributing them in some other way to first-time attendees and, periodically, to all members

V.

MEETINGS + SPONSORSHIP → RECOVERY

Benefits for Newcomers, Longtimers, Groups, and the Fellowship

During our meetings, we support one another by *listening* and *sharing*. At the same time, we avoid concentrating too much of our attention on the concerns of just one person. These two simultaneous approaches are beneficial for everyone, and they are in keeping with Tradition One, which tells us:

- that the good of the group must always come first, and
- that personal progress for the greatest number depends on group unity.

Sponsorship augments our meetings. From a *group* perspective, it enhances our group unity by strengthening our members' recovery. From an *individual* perspective, it enables members to embark on more intensive journeys of self-exploration and self-healing than would be possible during meetings alone.

Sponsorship is different from the more casual interactions that occur outside of or at the conclusion of meetings. However, sponsorship can *grow out of* such casual interactions: perhaps from those phone calls between meetings that were discussed earlier, or possibly from an interested, seasoned member approaching a newcomer after a meeting to lend additional support by sharing some meaningful personal experiences. Such exchanges can begin an empathetic connection that encourages the newer member to return, feel more "at home," and begin relating to a particular member in the group.

Sponsorship fills a need for members who want more individualized, structured attention. It enables a broader, lengthier, and more in-depth investigation of the Twelve Steps, thereby helping us move further along the path of recovery. Groups can easily encourage members to consider sponsorship and to become sponsors and sponsees themselves.

In ***Families Anonymous and Sponsorship***, refer to:

"Especially for Sponsees"

"Especially for Sponsors"

Even though sponsorship is nominally about the growth of the *sponsee*, in reality it is also about that of the *sponsor*. Sponsorship can foster a degree of closeness and understanding between two people in recovery that is often indispensable for opening hearts and promoting healing. As those two individuals—the sponsee and the sponsor—grow personally through sponsorship, their growth adds directly to the value of the insights they share within their group. Sponsorship not only enhances their own personal growth and recovery; it magnifies the recovery strength of their group and the FA fellowship as a whole.

Sponsorship benefits everyone! It means ...
HELPING YOURSELF ... HELPING EACH OTHER ...
HELPING YOUR GROUP ... HELPING THE FELLOWSHIP!



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