

Sponsorship: A Dying Art...Chicago Group Suggests A Revival Is Overdue  
A.A. Grapevine, February 1953

(Editor's Note: From the Metropolitan Rotating Committee the following "Message of Sponsorship" has been received. Issued as a letter to all of Chicago's 5,000-plus AAs, it reminds us that the Big Book says: "Practical experience shows us that nothing will so insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics." To provide space for an interesting approach to sponsorship received from a Canadian AA, we have abridged the letter somewhat.)

In the early days of the Chicago Group, sponsorship was done most thoroughly. Indeed, groups elsewhere in the country spoke of the "Chicago system" of sponsorship.

The picture has changed. Perhaps it is a natural result of growing big. At any rate, the old style of sponsoring, with the sponsor utterly devoted to his prospect, is now seen infrequently.

There is no way of checking the probable large number who have failed because of the lack of proper effort by their sponsors.

#### CHICAGO'S SUGGESTED PROGRAM

1. Responsibility is the first principle of good sponsorship; the sponsor is the one who assumes responsibility for the person seeking help. If one is unable to devote the time and attention essential to good sponsorship, one should not undertake, at least without a strong co-sponsor, such an assignment.
2. Sponsorship must be approached with the most serious attitude. AA is a life or death matter to the alcoholic seeking help; if we fail, the new man or woman has been denied the good chance he could have had with another sponsor. Prepare yourself for the first call on a prospect by re-reading the chapter in the book, "Working With Others."
3. Visit the new prospect as soon as possible after he calls for help; presenting the recovery program to him at the psychological moments he reaches for it may be the factor that saves his life.
4. On your first visit, tell the prospective AA, frankly and simply, some of your own story - with enough pauses that he may chime in with some of his own experiences and reactions. Let him ask questions. Explain how AA works, but keep your presentation brief and simple. Do not wear out your welcome...when he becomes restless take your leave, making an appointment to see him again as soon as it can be done.
5. In presenting the program to a prospect, don't thrust your personal views upon him. Tell him about the AA program as it is presented in the Big Book, and let him do his own interpreting, especially in regard to the spiritual aspects. He will get the views of many other AA's, in addition to yours, at meetings and in conversations. Out of all that, with what guidance you can give him, he will find a way to apply AA principles to his own life and problems.
6. Be prepared to sacrifice much of your time for a considerable period to give the prospect the greatest possible chance. Make yourself available to him daily for counsel and companionship.
7. See that the prospect becomes acquainted with many other AA's, so that he may get a broad picture of the AA program and find his own interpretation and application of its principles. Make the prospect truly your friend. Give of yourself without hesitation in trying to help him. Invite him to your home, preferably for a meal.
8. See that your prospect immediately gets a copy of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous; it is best that he buy a copy. Ownership of the book once was a virtual symbol of AA membership; regular reading and re-reading of the book is recommended practice for every AA as a tool of recovery.
9. Do not take on, in your enthusiasm, more prospects than you can properly handle. AA is strong medicine. It affords the recovered alcoholic a unique opportunity to serve his fellow man. The temptation to run up a big score of saved souls is strong. But one new member a year well-sponsored is a better result than 50 given the once-over lightly.
10. Emphasize the importance of regular attendance at meetings by precept and example. Even if you have grown careless about going to meetings, it is your responsibility to accompany the prospect to several such (and this may save you from a relapse).