

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Considerations and Suggestions for Kansas Al-Anon

This resource is offered to assist Al-Anon Groups in Kansas in consideration of how to approach the current pandemic. Our Area Delegate, Phil G., is the Director of Disease Control and Prevention at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and has prepared this document to be of service to the Area, Districts and Groups. Like everything in Al-Anon, take what you like and leave the rest.

First, consider approaching these discussions within groups, districts and the area with the Knowledge Based Decision Making questions in mind:

- A. What do we know about our membership's needs, wants and preferences that is relevant to this topic?
- B. What do we know about our resources (finances, membership participation, etc.) that is relevant to this topic?
- C. What do we know about the current realities (membership, culture, etc.) and our fellowship's environment (technology, spiritual principles, our Steps, Traditions, and Concepts) that is relevant to this topic?
- D. What are the pros and cons?
- E. What do we wish we knew?

As a nation, a state and in local communities we are currently in a window of time that we are being asked to take actions that will lessen the threat of community transmission of the virus. We are trying to contain the virus now so that greater outbreaks do not happen. If we do not act in community now, we risk conditions getting much worse and more people becoming ill. For high risk groups (elderly, immune compromised, those with respiratory or heart conditions) the severity of the illness can be worse. For lower risk groups (younger people, generally healthy people) many times may not get as ill but may carry the virus to others in high risk groups.

The primary symptoms of the virus are fever greater than 101 degrees, cough and lower respiratory conditions causing shortness of breath. It is very important that these symptoms not be ignored and anyone experiencing them should stay home and self-isolate. If the person is feeling extremely ill, medical care should be sought immediately. The person should CALL their medical provider, local health department, urgent care or emergency room and report the symptoms. Direction will be given by the medical provider/facility about where to go for medical care. It is important to not just walk in without first alerting the provider so that appropriate precautions may be made to prevent risking others being infected if in fact the person has the virus.

There are a variety of guidance that vary based on Public Health source about the size of group gatherings. These generally range between 10 and 50. The current Kansas recommendations are not to exceed 30, but this can vary by community. It can also vary by the size of the space for the gathering.

So with this background, what should groups do about holding face to face meetings? With group autonomy, this is a decision that each group and district need to make for themselves. Group conscience should be considered by each entity. Below are considerations to discuss.

Has the facility the group meets in put restrictions in place? Many churches and other facilities have closed to any activities.

What are the risks factors of the membership? Consider the high-risk group categories indicated above.

What is the ability of the group to have appropriate social distancing in the meeting space? Social distancing should be six feet of separation for anything greater than 10 minutes.

What is the risk of community transmission in our community? Many local health department website are providing daily updates of the number of cases in the community and if there is community transmission documented. Consider monitoring closely any guidance being given by your local health department which can change frequently.

If it is decided to continue in person meetings, discuss how to minimize risk. Consider how the surfaces in the room will be sanitized before the meeting and after the meeting. Assure hand washing is done before and after with soap and water for 20 seconds or have hand sanitizer used before and after. Consider how to space members in the room. Consider no touch meetings (no hugs, no hand holding) replaced with nods, elbow bumps, etc. If the weather is nice, consider meeting outside with no touch and proper social distancing.

If decisions are made to suspend meeting in person, discuss other options. This may be a great time for individuals to visit a registered electronic meetings recognized by AFG. A list of these meetings is available on the WSO website (<https://al-anon.org/al-anon-meetings/electronic-meetings/>). Consider holding your own meeting through an electronic option temporarily. Maybe using Zoom, Google Hangout, Skype, WebX, Free Conference Call and there are more similar options at no or low cost. This is great opportunity to look around the group and see who may have experience with these options. Maybe the youngest, quietest new member is where the solution could be had. Remember this is an opportunity to step out of your comfort zone and experiment with something new. Learning a new skill may be a new way of connecting with family that may not be around or able to travel while this pandemic is in process.

There are updated and growing guidelines available for the public and healthcare on the KDGE website <http://www.kdheks.gov/>. There is a large link on the front page to the resource kit.

Remember that it is times just like we are in that Al Anon can be our life saver. Stay connected whatever your group decision. Reach out and help support each other so no one must be alone through this. We may find stronger groups as a result of this time and the way we use our program.