



Adult Children of Alcoholics®/Dysfunctional Families

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January 15, 2020

Dear ACA Group Rep,

ACA World Service received 16 Proposals in response to a Request for Proposals that was sent to all groups in August. On behalf of the Fellowship, we wish to thank the submitting groups for their efforts.

These Proposals have been evaluated by WSO (the Board and appropriate Committees) to determine whether the ideas presented have already been implemented, are currently being worked on, and an analysis by WSO with a recommendation as to whether they merit discussion at the ABC.

In preparation for your group's Ballot discussion, we suggest you download a copy of the Proposals to distribute to your group member located at <https://acawso.org/category/ballot-prep/>. Other pertinent information is also available on that website.

After your group's decisions are made by group conscience, and you are ready to submit their responses, please fill in the online survey: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2020\\_ABC\\_Ballot](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2020_ABC_Ballot)

We advise that you not start the survey unless you will have time to complete it in one sitting.

If we can be of assistance, please email the committee at [bpc@adultchildren.org](mailto:bpc@adultchildren.org).

Please also note that information is available to register for the 2020 ABC as either an on-site Delegate or a remote Delegate at <https://www.acaworldconvention.org/>

Thank you for your participation in helping to shape the future of ACA.

The ACA WSO 2020 ABC Ballot Prep Committee



## 2020 ABC Ballot for Adult Children of Alcoholics

### **Proposal 2020 – 1**

Submitted on August 8, 2019 by FL216 from Tarpon Springs, FL

**Issue:** We propose . . . (the) Printing (of) Large Print Books

**History/Reasoning:** Easier to read

**Argument in Favor:** The (current) literature is hard for me to read

**WSO Analysis:** This proposal could have several possibly unintended consequences. In particular, expanding type size would likely increase the Big Red Book to nearly 1,000 pages, elevating its cost and weight. The alternative would be to make the book's dimensions much larger in order to make pages consistent between book formats. These factors, in addition to the much smaller print run, would increase its cost substantially. The Literature Committee will study the issues that this proposal raises for those who are visually impaired, including greater use of audio and e-publishing, as well as publishing large print where it is cost-effective. If this measure is approved for ABC debate, WSO recommends that any enactment be deferred until a more detailed study can be conducted in time for the 2021 ABC.

*If this proposal receives a 60% positive vote from the fellowship, it will be included as part of the ABC agenda, with the result of that discussion provided as part of the ABC minutes.*

### **Proposal 2020 – 2**

Submitted on September 29, 2019 by FIN0053 from Oulu, Finland

**Issue:** We propose that . . . We would like to have discussion about whether ACA members, who are members of another 12-step group, can serve in ACA service positions. It says in the Al-Anon Service Manual: "Service Participation by Members of Al-Anon Family Groups Who Are also Members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Al-Anon members who are also members of A.A. participate fully in all group activities, including group conscience decisions. However, they do not hold Al-Anon service positions that vote in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or A.A. as a whole

**History/Reasoning:** Service Participation by Members of Al-Anon Family Groups Who Are also Members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Al-Anon members who are also members of A.A. participate fully in all group activities, including group conscience decisions. However, they do not hold Al-Anon service positions that vote in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or A.A. as a whole.

**Argument in Favor:** it is important to have a conversation about this, because there are many members in ACA, who are a member of another 12-step group and are willing to have a service position. Sometimes they are not sure about are they allowed to have service position in both groups.

**WSO Analysis:** Historically, the ACA viewpoint on this is different than Al-Anon's. Many ACA members are also members of other 12 step programs. ACA does not exclude or restrict members from service who may be members of other programs.

Service in ACA is a vital part of a member's recovery and we encourage all members to participate in service as a part of their program. We do ask members doing service in ACA to be aware of their other time commitments in general and specifically require ACA Board Members to not do service in a similar capacity in another program, as stated in our OPPM Section III – WSO Board of Trustees, Sub-section K. Qualifications for Board Membership – 5. WSO Trustees may not hold a similar position in another 12-Step Fellowship.

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Meetings, Intergroups, and regions are autonomous and may adopt their own policies for qualifying service position requirements as long they respect the traditions and concepts.

Unless the membership feels this should change and ACA should become more exclusionary, WSO feels this item does not require discussion at the ABC.

*If this proposal receives a 60% positive vote from the fellowship, it will be included as part of the ABC agenda, with the result of that discussion provided as part of the ABC minutes.*

### **Proposal 2020 – 3**

Submitted on November 5, 2019 by the WSO Service Network Committee

**Issue:** The Service Network Committee is asking the ACA Fellowship to adopt the following preamble and have the WSO Literature Committee use it when they feel it is appropriate when updating current literature.

#### **Adult Children of Alcoholics/Dysfunctional Families (ACA) Preamble**

ACA is a spiritual program supporting people who grew up with family dysfunction. That experience infected us then and it affects us today. While our members may be from homes where alcohol or drugs were present, it is not a requirement. People who suffered abuse, neglect or unhealthy behavior are also members.

The purpose of ACA is:

- 1) to shelter and support members in confronting denial
- 2) to comfort those mourning their early loss of security, trust and love and
- 3) to teach the skills for reparenting ourselves with gentleness, humor, love and respect. \*

ACA provides a safe, nonjudgmental environment that allows us to grieve our childhoods and to conduct an honest inventory of ourselves and our families. Identifying with the Laundry List Traits (The Problem), we learn to live in The Solution, one day at a time.

\* This paragraph is adapted from the Identity Papers

#### **History/Reasoning:**

- A preamble is a brief introduction and description of our program
- ACA currently does not have a preamble
- Numerous pieces of our literature have various preamble type statements. (ACA Is, Meeting Opening Format, Homepage, etc.)
- We believe that adopting one preamble would have all of our literature be consistent
- Meeting groups would have a consistent preamble available to use in their meeting scripts if they choose
- The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions are not mentioned in the Preamble, because they are already part of most meeting formats.
- The Service Network Committee asks that you put this proposal on the 2020 ballot and participate in Town Hall meetings prior to the 2020 ABC to address any issues. If needed, we can then make a one-time friendly amendment to accept a fellowship wide approved ACA Preamble.

#### **Argument in Favor:**

- The ACA preamble will be inclusive and respectful of our diversity statement
- This preamble was developed with fellowship wide input via the Service Network Committee and Town Hall Meetings
- We used the following goals to guide us in its creation:
  - ACA is a spiritual program, not a religious program

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- ACA is inclusive of people from homes where alcohol and drugs were not present
- We kept the language simple so that it will be easy to translate
- We kept it brief, clear, and concise (limited word count, avoided redundancy)
- A preamble is by definition a brief introductory summary

**WSO Analysis:** The proposal causes no major difficulties for WSO or the fellowship. At the 2019 ABC a proposed mission statement to be read at meetings was referred back to WSO for additional refinement. If this proposal receives enough votes to be on the ABC Agenda, and a motion is passed to approve it, the proposed Preamble would be available online and could be included in future literature updates. Under the Fourth Tradition, its use by meetings would be voluntary.

*If this proposal receives a 60% positive vote from the fellowship, it will be included as part of the ABC agenda, with the result of that discussion provided as part of the ABC minutes.*

### **Proposal 2020 – 4**

Submitted on November 6, 2019 by CA1312 from Cottonwood, CA

**Issue:** We propose that . . . the ACA Copyright Release Form be revised to include a second option, so ACA WSO can be granted permission by anonymous authors or groups to reuse or excerpt their already copyrighted or published materials.

**History/Reasoning:** Currently, ACA’s Copyright Release requires that all submissions be an “unrestricted gift to ACA WSO” from its author(s) or creator(s) of all rights, including the right of the submitters to reuse the materials themselves. ACA WSO can edit, alter or not use the submission as it sees fit, but retains, nonetheless, permanent ownership of submitted materials. Anonymous authors and creators of ACA posters, charts, coloring books, etc. thus can’t share their copyrighted or published materials within ACA as a whole, even free, without losing all rights to it. Intergroups, Regions and Groups in the fellowship that produce books, calendars, charts, coloring books to raise 7th Tradition funds are also confused by this policy.

**Argument in Favor:** We can free up and encourage creativity within ACA as a whole without putting the fellowship at risk of being flooded by unvetted material. A simple way for this is to add a second choice to ACA Copyright Release, revising the form to a pair of boxes (still on one single page.) ACA WSO will still be under no obligation to publish or circulate any submissions, but local fellowships and creative ACA members will be empowered to share even the creative work they or their group want to retain. Authors will select either, 1. present option, or 2. “I/we hereby grant ACA WSO irrevocable permission to use my/our copyrighted or previously published above named material in whole or in part, free or for sale without any remuneration or compensation to me/us, or to my/our heirs or assignees. ACA WSO, Inc. may edit or excerpt this submission for publishing said article, chart, poem, share and or artwork in any ACA WSO, Inc. publication in any form whatsoever, including, but not limited to, ACA ComLine, ACA WSO website, or other hard copy or electronic publication, citing attribution to the author(s) by first name & last initial only, or, if from a group, by group name and city. I/we understand that ACA WSO reserves discretion whether or not to publish the above submission.”

**WSO Analysis:** WSO supports a revised Copyright Release and is already working with copyright attorneys to create such a document.

*If this proposal receives a 60% positive vote from the fellowship, it will be included as part of the ABC agenda, with the result of that discussion provided as part of the ABC minutes.*

### **Proposal 2020 – 5**

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Submitted on November 13, 2019 by MD0060 from Arnold, MD

**Issue:** We propose that . . . Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA) change its name to Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families (ACADF)

**History/Reasoning:** Adult Children of Alcoholics has been welcoming those from non-alcoholic dysfunctional families for some time. However, the ACA name itself does not express this, thus requiring regular and repeated clarification. In meetings, it is necessary to provide an explicit explanation that ACA is not just for children of alcoholics but those from non-alcoholic dysfunctional families. Including adult children from dysfunctional families in the fellowship is at the foundation of ACA as evidenced by its inclusion in the first paragraph of “Welcome to ACA” in the BRB on page xii and the fact the Alcoholics/Dysfunctional Families is on the front cover.

**Argument in Favor:** In all ways this fellowship is already Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families (ACADF) except in name. The fellowship already recognizes that not having dysfunctional families in the name is an issue that requires an explanation in the meeting and in the text. This is an issue because those adult children (without an alcoholic parent) that are suffering may not know there is a program for them after seeing the name ACA. In this fellowship we carry the message to those who still suffer (12th step) through attraction rather than promotion (tradition 11), yet many adult children who are suffering disqualify themselves before attending a single meeting. Simply due to the fact that our name appears to exclude them, these potential members will never hear the dysfunctional family clarification read in our meetings and written in our texts. We personally know adult children that did not join the program for years thinking that they did not qualify. The new name (ACADF) welcomes those from all dysfunctional families while still emphasizing the severe impact an alcoholic parent can have on an adult child. An additional benefit will be that ACADF will help differentiate our fellowship from ACoA, the similarly named program that is under the Al-Anon umbrella. A modified logo that keeps the spirit of the existing logo is below.

**WSO Analysis:** WSO does not support this change. We are officially “Welcome to Adult Children of Alcoholics®/ Dysfunctional Families” now and feel no change is necessary at this time.

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### **Proposal 2020 – 6**

Submitted on November 19, 2019 by NET0019 from Amsterdam, Netherlands

**Issue:** We propose . . . that WSO create a document regarding the experiences, strength, and hope of members who have faced situations in which individuals or groups have not followed the traditions or principles of ACA. We suggest that this document be published now as a pamphlet and/or online resource and later as a chapter in the next edition of the Big Red Book. We understand that the literature committee oversees ACA-related literature issues, but we believe that this topic is highly relevant and merits fellowship-wide attention and discussion. We note that the Crosstalk pamphlet has some examples of individuals’ stories that are directly focused on various dimensions of cross talk. There is another example of the type of stories we have in mind in the current version of the Big Red Book in the section on Tradition 10. We would like to participate with our fellows in expanding this format to other dilemmas that we, as ACA fellows, face but often find difficult to discuss or resolve without the guidance that additional texts might offer. We imagine stories that:

- Address dilemmas related to various traditions or principles;
- Place our common welfare and ACA unity first; and
- Express experience, strength, and hope.

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We have included several examples of such stories in the Appendix on the next page (which are not able to be attached to the website survey format).

**History/Reasoning:** Over time in our recovery in ACA, some of us have had painful and confusing experiences with groups or individuals that have resulted from the traditions and/or principles not being followed. For example, we have participated in online groups that did not rely upon a group conscience in decision-making; we have seen individuals blocked from participation in online groups without recourse; and we have unwittingly subjected ourselves to 13th-step behaviors without realizing it until significant damage was done to us. These are just some examples of situations when we could have benefitted from reading the stories of others who had faced similar situations, stories such as those that address the meaning of the steps and traditions in the BRB, but focused specifically on dilemmas and solutions.

**Argument in Favor:** Particularly with the rise of online groups and with regard to sensitive issues, such as the 13th step—which can occur with sponsors or others who have many years in the program and to whom we might otherwise turn for advice—we believe that individual fellows as well as groups could benefit from reading about how others have faced, understood, and responded to, various dilemmas in ACA groups. These dilemmas, and the need for their resolution, seem to apply globally.

**WSO Analysis:** Fellowship safety is essential, and a deeper understanding of the Traditions would help the fellowship support group safety. WSO is working on several forms of additional guidance, including a Fellowship Service Manual, regarding how ACA members and groups can apply the Traditions and Concepts to various forms of safety issues. If approved, this proposal can be incorporated into that larger effort. No major difficulties are foreseen.

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### **Proposal 2020 – 7**

Submitted on November 19, 2019 by OR0145 from Florence, OR

**Issue:** We propose that . . . A pamphlet of the word principles for each step be made.

**History/Reasoning:** The principles are mentioned in both Step and Tradition 12 but it isn't well known what they are.

**Argument in Favor:** this information adds greatly to the understanding of the steps.

**WSO Analysis:** Any new pamphlet requires the creation of a development team, extended review, and some cost for design and publishing. While such costs are modest and normal for any new trifold or booklet, it is difficult for WSO to execute this project without clearer information about its intent. The Ballot Preparation Committee contacted the proposers of this measure in late November for clarification and at the time this Ballot was sent to the fellowship, no response had been received.

*If this proposal receives a 60% positive vote from the fellowship, it will be included as part of the ABC agenda, with the result of that discussion provided as part of the ABC minutes.*

### **Proposal 2020 – 8**

Submitted on November 27, 2019 by CA1385 from Laguna Hills, CA

**Issue:** We propose that . . . Additional Boundary Resources are needed in ACA Guideline materials to assist adult children with establishing healthy and safe boundaries, using BRB and ACA materials. This material can

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be used as: a chapter, a workbook, an Introduction to Boundaries booklet, a guide for presentations and Group work at ACA meetings or conventions

**History/Reasoning:** Background or history of the issue: There are many valuable selections that can be used for boundaries in the BRB, YB, Steps, “Bill of Rights”, “I statements” and “Strengthening My Recovery”. This material can be organized and used as: a chapter, a workbook, an Introduction to Boundaries booklet, a guide for presentations and Group work at ACA meetings or conventions

**Argument in Favor:** We want to take the information and tools available in ACA materials and lay out this information in a progressive, sequential stages. The Boundary Chapter or workbook will follow the BRB starting at Chapter 1. The Boundary chapter or Workbook will follow the following: BRB reading Selections, The Steps, prayers, Meditations, gratuities, Slogans and Sayings and other tools in chronological order per the BRB- This way, an Adult child can read and learn about boundaries using the BRB. A sponsor or Yellow Book group members could incorporate this information into their meetings. The Adult Child may gain additional understanding and tools to help them evolve in their journey and with the practice of Boundaries.

**WSO Analysis:** Boundaries are an essential tool of ACA recovery and are receiving increased attention in new literature expected to be published in 2020. This proposal can be incorporated into existing WSO efforts to provide ACA members with practical recovery tools. No major difficulties are foreseen.

*If this proposal receives a 60% positive vote from the fellowship, it will be included as part of the ABC agenda, with the result of that discussion provided as part of the ABC minutes.*

### **Proposal 2020 – 9**

Submitted on November 27, 2019 by FL0302 from Gulfport, FL

**Issue:** We propose that . . . WSO publish an ACA beginners meeting handbook, much like “A New Hope Beginners Meeting Handbook” currently available at [www.ACAhope.com](http://www.ACAhope.com) , to provide an introductory ACA program overview that is accessible, digestible and engaging for newcomers and beginners.

**History/Reasoning:** Many adult children initially identify with ACA strongly, but then fade from the program within the first three to four months. It often seems that despite being enthusiastic and hopeful upon entering ACA, participants can easily become overwhelmed and discouraged. The "Big Red Book" is a life-saving resource, but it's a voluminous work that can be daunting for ACA newcomers. For many, the idea of immediately jumping into ACA Step work can be terrifying. We who submit this proposal decided in late 2018 to start a new local meeting specifically for beginners. We developed introductory materials that could be used to support and guide those attending that meeting. While there is no single path to healing the effects of childhood trauma through ACA, we created what we feel is a solid initial draft of a clear, concise yet comprehensive ACA program overview that includes:

- Topic summaries that: 1) are written specifically for beginners and address fundamental concepts in ACA recovery, 2) are derived from existing ACA-WSO conference approved literature, and 3) can be read and discussed manageably within a one-hour meeting timeframe
- Questions on each topic that participants can: 1) draw from to help frame their initial personal shares at meetings, 2) use as a tool to connect with other participants outside of the meetings, and 3) experience as preparation for more in-depth program work
- References pointing to additional information on each topic in existing ACA conference approved literature (texts, workbooks, trifolds, booklets, etc.)
- Fundamental program materials (the Problem / Traits, the Solution, the 12 Steps, the 12 Traditions & the Promises) as well as other supplemental resources, tools and exercises.

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**Argument in Favor:** The ACA beginners meeting handbook we've initially developed slowly brings participants out of isolation through a predictable, structured, drop-in meeting framework. This approach allows them to engage with program resources incrementally with less likelihood of becoming overwhelmed. Participants can miss weeks, attending at their own pace, and still feel supported as they learn what it means to "work a program." More intensive reparenting practices and Step work can begin independently from this introductory handbook overview at whatever point participants themselves determine they are ready. We have seen some success so far, and many "non-beginners" who drop-in to check out the beginners meeting have said they really wished ACA had resources like this when they first found the program.

**WSO Analysis:** The WSO Literature Committee has placed a major emphasis on Beginner-friendly literature. Two projects scheduled for publication are the "Ready Set Go!!" workshop guide, and the "Getting Started" newcomers text. This measure could overlap to some degree with projects under development, but that are significantly different in focus. If this measure is approved, the Literature Committee can work with the proposers to identify strategies for harmonizing the projects to best suit newcomers' needs.

*If this proposal receives a 60% positive vote from the fellowship, it will be included as part of the ABC agenda, with the result of that discussion provided as part of the ABC minutes.*

### **Proposal 2020 – 10**

Submitted on November 27, 2019 by MA047 from Cambridge, MA

**Issue:** We propose that . . . the WSO create a daily reparenting reader similar in structure to the Strengthening My Recovery (SMR) daily reader. Reparenting tips, meditations, etc. would draw from the forthcoming Loving Parent Guidebook, the Big Red Book, other ACA literature, including new material, and ACA member submissions. The daily reparenting reader will complement the upcoming Loving Parent Guidebook, which helps ACAs learn and apply reparenting tools. The proposed reparenting reader will provide daily inspiration and support us to reparent ourselves with gentleness, humor, love, and respect.

**History/Reasoning:** A daily reparenting reader would reinforce the first line of the solution: "The Solution is to become Your Own Loving Parent." Daily entries would help ACAs make reparenting a regular and accessible practice. Having 365 entries would give our large, diverse fellowship more options to deepen their reparenting skills. The reparenting reader would support and complement the existing SMR daily reader. It would offer another way for ACAs to connect with each other and break isolation. Practical and inspirational themes could include, but would not be limited to:

- The meaning of reparenting
- Reparenting and gentleness humor, love and respect
- Working the steps and reparenting together -Detaching with love from the Critical Parent
- Strengthening your Loving Parent
- Learning Loving Parent skills to validate, reassure and nurture your inner child
- Helping your inner child learn to trust your loving parent
- Strategies and tools to connect with your inner child -Growth and changes in inner child work
- Reparenting and self-care

**Argument in Favor:** The SMR daily reader provides enormous value to the fellowship. SMR covers a wide range of ACA recovery topics and helps ACAs deepen their overall recovery. A reparenting reader would expose ACAs to more ways to engage with and incorporate reparenting into their daily lives. ACAs can use

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the reader alone, in pairs, in groups, etc. It offers members an accessible way to feel supported with reparenting, which can be elusive for many.

**WSO Analysis:** Much like literature focusing on newcomer needs, safety, and Traditions, WSO is placing an expanded emphasis on Reparenting and Inner Child work. The Loving Parent Guidebook, authorized by the 2017 ABC, is scheduled for beta-testing release in 2020. A daily reader could be a logical companion to Reparenting literature already in development.

*If this proposal receives a 60% positive vote from the fellowship, it will be included as part of the ABC agenda, with the result of that discussion provided as part of the ABC minutes.*

### **Proposal 2020 – 11**

Submitted on November 27, 2019 by IL203 from Chicago, IL

**Issue:** We propose that . . . Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families (ACA) use the more inclusive term “Higher Power” in its wording of the 12 Steps.

**History/Reasoning:** The ACA 12 Steps represent the core of our program and are read at nearly every ACA meeting around the World. We understand that when the ACA 12 Steps were adapted from AA, in order to be gender neutral, the word God was substituted for ‘him’ or ‘his’ in Steps 3, 7 and 11, and is thus used more than most other 12 Step Programs.

**Argument in Favor:** This proposal is not a criticism of anyone's belief system, but rather an acknowledgement that this may be a way to make ACA more accessible and inclusive. Chapter 5 of the Big Red Book is entitled “ACA is a Spiritual Not a Religious Program.” We believe that using the term Higher Power in the 12 Steps reinforces the principles articulated in that chapter. In addition to other reasons for this change, many who come to our rooms searching for recovery have experienced religious abuse and trauma in their childhoods. For them, Higher Power is a term with far less triggering potential. Also, while we acknowledge the word God is used to denote a power or entity greater than ourselves within many cultures and religions, both Christian and otherwise, in others it is not. Adjusting our terminology in this way can allow the program to feel more accessible to those of all backgrounds and beliefs while remaining true to ACA principles. The more inclusive our program can be, the better the chances it can reach all adult children.

**WSO Analysis:** In 2019, the Literature Committee authorized a comprehensive study of Spiritual terminology in ACA literature, including alternatives groups might use with regard to the 12 Steps. The goal is to make meetings and literature inclusive to all participants. This study is continuing, but early discussions have identified deep sensitivities among those with different spiritual perspectives. Rather than mandating piecemeal changes, the Literature Committee recommends that no action be taken in this area until a holistic approach is identified for all ACA literature. The submitters of this proposal are invited to take part in the Literature Committee study on spiritual references.

*If this proposal receives a 60% positive vote from the fellowship, it will be included as part of the ABC agenda, with the result of that discussion provided as part of the ABC minutes.*

### **Proposal 2020 – 12**

Submitted on November 27, 2019 by TEL0390/TEL0109/TEL0344/TEL0384/TEL272

**Issue:** We propose that . . . Our group would like these 4 protocols be "Suggested" for telephone meetings listed on the “adultchildren.org” website to support Safety through Consistency on the phone-bridge. This Protocol is grounded in “The 12 Traditions.” The goal of these 4 Protocols is to facilitate guidelines for

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keeping phone meetings safe for Newcomers and members whose first contact with ACA may be thru phone meetings due to the nature of our common problem. Phone Bridge Protocols

- 1) Each phone meeting should be One hour unless otherwise specified by the individual group and length of time listed on WSOs website. (phone meetings need to open and close on time)
- 2) The virtual room Only opens when the moderator arrives and enters the moderator code and Closes when the meeting time has expired, and the moderator hangs up. Moderator codes are given to trusted servants ONLY.
- 3) There is NO "fellowship/after meeting" on access codes that are listed WSO meetings. This is to protect the Newcomer who dials in and doesn't know the difference between a meeting in progress and fellowship (groups can set up a separate Non-ACA affiliated fellowship line)
- 4) For purposes of true Autonomy each "Group" shall have a separate individual Access Code/Pin#. Hosting multiple "groups" on a single access code/pin# dilutes the autonomy of the individual group.

**History/Reasoning:** Six years ago approx. 45 meetings weekly were on "ONE" access code. WSO considered each "meeting" an "Individual Group". Being on one access code limited each groups autonomy. No group could make a decision regarding the meeting space without affecting the other groups on that access code. Meetings ended, fellowship began and continued till the next meeting started. There were a handful of members who violently and abusively disrupted the entire line daily for 2 years. They held the access code hostage verbally assaulting moderators, members and dashboard account holders. We went from policing the line with the use of the "dashboard", to attempting to unify all 45 meetings as one group, to eventually moving fellowship off meeting lines and creating the above protocols which have been active and successfully used by 8 or more groups at multiple daily meetings on the phone bridge for the past 3 ½ years.

**Argument in Favor:** 1) A Moderator Code is like a key to a room. Opening and Closing a meeting space/access code on time with the Moderator Code eliminated members dialing into the line and using it as an open chat line for fellowship. It ensures that when a newcomer dials into an ACA meeting they GET an ACA meeting and Not a chat line unrelated to ACA recovery. 2) Each group having an individual access code insures them complete and true autonomy and the ability to deal w disruptive members. without violating Traditions or affecting other groups by blocking any member from a particular access code.

**WSO Analysis:** While encouraging group safety, WSO supports most of these suggestions. They can be added to the Best Practices section of the WSO Service website (<https://acawso.org/category/best-practices/>) if the authors of this proposal wish to do so. Each group is autonomous and WSO does not dictate how groups are run. Hosting multiple "groups" on a single access code/pin# is no different than a recovery clubhouse and WSO does not support restricting their use.

*If this proposal receives a 60% positive vote from the fellowship, it will be included as part of the ABC agenda, with the result of that discussion provided as part of the ABC minutes.*

### **Proposal 2020 – 13**

Submitted on November 28, 2019 by NV0072 from Reno, NV

**Issue:** We propose that . . . The "Alcoholic/Dysfunctional Families" part of the title on the cover of the Big Red Book be moved up to be consistent with the Title Page, Page I. "Adult Children of Alcoholics Alcoholic/Dysfunctional Families". Also that the spine be changed to read "Adult Children of Alcoholics/Dysfunctional Families".

**History/Reasoning:** Past proposals show that there is an issue with members from dysfunctional, non alcoholic homes feeling left out.

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**Argument in Favor:** In order for members of ACA who are from dysfunctional, non alcoholic homes to have equal billing as those with alcoholic parents. "Dysfunctional Families" should not be an afterthought or Subtitle. Also, the cover of the book should match the Title Page.

**WSO Analysis:** This proposal would require modest redesign efforts but could be accommodated as part of new reprint orders. ACA literature generally identifies us as Adult Children of Alcoholics/Dysfunctional Families, so this proposal would eliminate inconsistency on the cover about our organization's identity.

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### **Proposal 2020 – 14**

Submitted on November 28, 2019 by NV0072 from Reno, NV

**Issue:** We propose that . . . The cover of the Big Red Book of ACA be Embossed rather than printed.

**History/Reasoning:** The current printed cover (gold print) is not durable and rubs off in a short time.

**Argument in Favor:** The print currently used is not durable. It may also cause an issue of Anonymity in public places with gold print on a red cover which is visible from a distance. Embossing would be consistent with examples from other 12 step programs such as the Blue Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, which has been proven more durable and less visible.

**WSO Analysis:** WSO is reviewing a number of possible alternatives to the BRB cover, each of which has various impacts on the existing cost structure of the BRB. If this motion is passed by the ABC, the Literature Committee recommends deferring action until more information can be presented to ABC delegates on cost-benefits of various ideas.

*If this proposal receives a 60% positive vote from the fellowship, it will be included as part of the ABC agenda, with the result of that discussion provided as part of the ABC minutes.*

### **Proposal 2020 – 15**

Submitted on November 30, 2019 by IG #76 from Arroyo Grande, CA

**Issue:** We propose that . . . WSO institute a 3-year literature evaluation process, which includes providing the delegates to the ABC with a review, e-copy by January 1 of the ensuing April ABC. At that ABC, delegates will vote only to decide if the content merits review and commentary submissions during the year as a WSO project for the ensuing year. By the following January1, the edited manuscript including the fellowship input will be disseminated to the new delegates. At that 2nd year ABC, the manuscript will be presented to the delegates. Delegates may accept the manuscript as written, or with minor changes (specified by delegates) designate it as "conference approved literature," allow one more year to implement suggested changes. At the third ABC, delegates may accept the manuscript as "conference approved literature" or reject the project. Rejected projects may not be submitted again.

**History/Reasoning:** Delegates, under the current system, do not have the opportunity to read or even see proposed literature before it is presented for a vote to become "conference approved literature." To date delegates have relied on the input of Board members or project developers prior to casting their votes.

**Argument in Favor:** Passing this proposal will to ensure quality, conference-approved, ACA literature for the fellowship. It will result in literature that truly reflects the ACA fellowship since they will have far greater input on shaping it.

**WSO Analysis:** The Literature Committee is near completion of a revised literature approval policy, which it intends to present at the 2020 ABC. There are significant similarities between the Literature

## 2020 ABC Ballot for Adult Children of Alcoholics

Committee’s policy and this ballot measure—especially that there should be extended fellowship review and comment on new literature before the ABC is asked to grant Conference approval. The Literature Committee will share its draft policy revision with the authors of this ballot measure, with a goal of seeking common ground on any specifics where the two proposals diverge.

*If this proposal receives a 60% positive vote from the fellowship, it will be included as part of the ABC agenda, with the result of that discussion provided as part of the ABC minutes.*

### **Proposal 2020 – 16**

Submitted on November 30, 2019 by IG #76 from Arroyo Grande, CA

**Issue:** We propose that . . . the WSO Literature Committee reevaluate the trifold, “To the Beginner in All of Us” that is currently being disseminated. Until it is reevaluated, edited, and made acceptable, the trifold will not be disseminated.

**History/Reasoning:** At least one trifold, was put out for suggestions one year by a previous Literature Committee. After input, it was published. It doesn’t appear that any fellowship suggestions were used, but the currently disseminated trifold is unclear and incoherent. As such it confuses members of our fellowship and reflects badly on the entire program. The previous WSO Literature Committee did not respond to membership concerns, and this trifold is now in a long line of literature and trifolds to be updated.

**Argument in Favor:** Passing this proposal will stop the dissemination of at least this one piece of sub-standard literature.

**WSO Analysis:** “To the Beginner in All of Us” was approved at the 2015 ABC. ACA’s Literature Evaluation subcommittee is undertaking a broad review of all ACA trifolds to determine which need updating, and this trifold is included in that study. If the ABC directs removal of this trifold, that can be done without difficulty. In the meantime, the Literature Committee has begun dialogue with the proposers of this measure to learn more about specific concerns.

*If this proposal receives a 60% positive vote from the fellowship, it will be included as part of the ABC agenda, with the result of that discussion provided as part of the ABC minutes.*







## ACA Annual Business Conference Ballot Proposal, 2020

Submitted By the Saturday Morning Meeting, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

### *Issue*

We propose that WSO create a document regarding the experiences, strength, and hope of members who have faced situations in which individuals or groups have not followed the traditions or principles of ACA. We suggest that this document be published now as a pamphlet and/or online resource and later as a chapter in the next edition of the *Big Red Book*. We understand that the literature committee oversees ACA-related literature issues, but we believe that this topic is highly relevant and merits fellowship-wide attention and discussion. We note that the *Crosstalk* pamphlet has some examples of individuals' stories that are directly focused on various dimensions of cross talk. There is another example of the type of stories we have in mind in the current version of the *Big Red Book* in the section on Tradition 10. We would like to participate with our fellows in expanding this format to other dilemmas that we, as ACA fellows, face but often find difficult to discuss or resolve without the guidance that additional texts might offer. We imagine stories that:

- Address dilemmas related to various traditions or principles;
- Place our common welfare and ACA unity first; and
- Express experience, strength, and hope.

We have included several examples of such stories in the Appendix on the next page.

### *Background or History of the Issue*

Over time in our recovery in ACA, some of us have had painful and confusing experiences with groups or individuals that have resulted from the traditions and/or principles not being followed. For example, we have participated in online groups that did not rely upon a group conscience in decision-making; we have seen individuals blocked from participation in online groups without recourse; and we have unwittingly subjected ourselves to 13<sup>th</sup>-step behaviors without realizing it until significant damage was done to us. These are just some examples of situations when we could have benefitted from reading the stories of others who had faced similar situations, stories such as those that address the meaning of the steps and traditions in the *BRB*, but focused specifically on dilemmas and solutions.

### *Argument in Favor*

Particularly with the rise of online groups and with regard to sensitive issues, such as the 13<sup>th</sup> step—which can occur with sponsors or others who have many years in the program and to whom we might otherwise turn for advice—we believe that individual fellows as well as groups could benefit from reading about how others have faced, understood, and responded to, various dilemmas in ACA groups. These dilemmas, and the need for their resolution, seem to apply globally.

**Example 1: Traditions 2 and 9**

***The organizational structure of the online group I had been attending for six months had seemed vague to me.*** At this time of my life, I desperately needed to attend as many groups as I could and I did not have access to face-to-face groups, so I was very grateful to have found an online group. There seemed to be a few people who took responsibility for organizing several meetings per week, and I was glad for their service. But over time I noticed that the online format used during meetings was changed even though no changes had been discussed during the group business meetings. I also learned that a small group of people exchanged emails about group issues and made decisions about the group, including regarding blocking certain members from participation, without taking a group conscience. The group had not appointed these members for such tasks. When I raised these issues in a business meeting, several members of the decision-making group explained why a group conscience was not sought in the online context. After the business meeting was over, they sent me a private email suggesting that I find a different group to attend if I did not like the way the group was conducted. This was a very painful and confusing experience for me that triggered feelings from my dysfunctional family: “To earn and keep our love, you have to accept our behavior and be like us.” The secretive process of conducting group business privately through email also reminded me of my family’s inability to manage conflict, and it reinforced the rules of dysfunction: “Don’t talk, don’t trust, don’t feel.” Through this process, I returned time and again to the *BRB*’s description of traditions two and nine. I considered it an opportunity to learn to trust myself in my interpretation of what was happening, that the use of email was actually concealing inappropriate uses of control and power by a small group that was not responsible to those they served. I did not know, though, how to honor tradition one and prioritize the group’s common welfare. I also did not know how to discuss issues in a way that would respect anonymity and avoid gossip. Ultimately, I left the group since it was not following the traditions and relied on my Higher Power to give me the tools and resources necessary to continue to grow in recovery even without these meetings, and that is what has happened.

**Example 2: Tradition 7**

***Being financially solvent did not make us fully self-supporting.*** In my first home meeting, we always had enough donations to meet our financial obligations and keep a prudent reserve. However, no one volunteered to be the group’s treasurer, so we kept our cash donations in a tin and stored it in a crate with our format notebook, *BRB*, and other supplies. When rent came due, someone in the group volunteered to take enough cash from the tin to pay the rent. We kept track of how much money came in and went out by having each meeting’s leader write the amounts from the 7<sup>th</sup> tradition in a notebook where we then had a running total. Despite having no treasurer, we did have a member who had volunteered as the contact person with the facility that hosted our meeting. However, this member became unable to continue in this role due to failing health. The group had no regularly scheduled business meeting to address our challenges, and group members seemed to express distaste for having business meetings at all. So, we never replaced our contact person. Consequently, when the facility relocated, we had not received any of the emails warning us of the change or requesting that we pick up our group belongings. It was summertime, and due to various circumstances, many group members were away. When we returned, the facility had moved to a new location and our crate could not be located. After facility staff conducted a search in all of the places they could imagine that our crate might be, they declared that it must have been discarded. Additionally, the new location could no longer

## Appendix

host our meeting on the same evening as before the relocation. Because we now had no supplies, no money, and no location, the group disbanded. This experience taught me to interpret the term “self-supporting” as more than just raising enough funds to meet our expenses. Self-supporting also means having consistent and reliable group members who do service to keep the group running, and self-supporting means having regular business meetings that the majority of the group’s members participate in in order to address group business before major issues arise. After all of this happened, I reflected back on whether I had made the right decision not to take on the role of treasurer myself. Despite this unfortunate set of events, I still believe that my decision not to do service in that way at that time and place aligned with the will of my Higher Power and True Self. I made the decision that was right for me without trying to control the outcome, and the outcome was quite a difficult one. Nevertheless, I believe that the disbanding of this unhealthy group has also made space for the establishment of a healthier one when the time is right.

### **Example 3: 13<sup>th</sup> Step**

*I assumed that someone with so many years in recovery was trustworthy.* We had met after I had 10 months of recovery in ACA and had started to attend a new group in search of a sponsor. I had just immigrated to a new country and was trying to adjust to starting a new job and grieving a recent divorce. I was lonely and desperate for recovery and for connection. In this new group, I learned of the opportunity to do service by helping an experienced ACA member plan a social event and gave my telephone number to be contacted for the cause. But I began receiving texts from this person that were personal in nature. I appreciated the attention and was glad to connect with someone in recovery. I readily ignored red flags related to the style of this communication as well as my misunderstanding and misgivings about this person’s intentions and wishes. When the texts became calls and the calls started out about recovery but then sometimes included questions about sexual topics, I became even more confused. Rather than recognizing that confusion as a crossing of my boundary and limiting the contact, I interpreted it as an invitation to work harder at finding out more. I ignored much evidence that this person was not presenting recovery as described in the *Big Red Book*. I stayed in this situation for quite a long time, trying to figure out how to maintain the connection that I was so desperate for and that I thought my Higher Power had brought into my life even though I kept feeling uncomfortable and getting hurt. I recognize now how my personal situation made me vulnerable. I also know that the dissociation in me that is a result of the family disease of dysfunction causes me to ignore red flags. Somehow my thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are disconnected from each other and the result of that is that I don’t know how I feel about certain situations or what to do about them. I already had ten months in recovery, so I did not think the 13<sup>th</sup> step really applied to me, but it did. There was a power differential between us created by the different amount of time we each had in recovery as well as by my vulnerability. Additionally, I was new to the group and I had not given consent to be contacted for social reasons. This contact gave me opportunities to develop my relationship with my inner child and True Self as I became more aware of how I felt about things in the moment and what I needed, but it also made me feel unsafe in meetings and could have easily derailed my recovery process. Despite the fact that my group’s format includes the paragraph from the *Big Red Book* regarding the 13<sup>th</sup> step, I did not recognize this contact as 13<sup>th</sup> step behavior when it first began, and I experienced a lot of pain as a result. I wish I had had a better way to recognize 13<sup>th</sup> step behavior when it happened to me.

**Example 4: Sponsorship and the 13<sup>th</sup> Step**

*Too eager to recover fast and be top of my class again.* I felt so grateful, blessed even, to have found this fellowship. The clarity and sense of belonging it gave me felt great. I felt very positive and confident towards my recovery. All I needed now was a good sponsor. So I went looking for one. In that process I approached several experienced fellows. But one guy in particular stuck out. His deep program knowledge seemed enormous. Impressive even. So of course I fell for it all and thought: “That’s my guy!”

Quite quickly I felt even better about the program and my recovery process. However after a while I started noticing things that didn’t feel good at all, things that seemed contradictory to what I read in the *Big Red Book*. It slowly went from bad to worse. Violations of anonymity. Gossip. Critical and judgmental talk about most other fellows. Nobody really understood the program like he did. If only people would listen more to him and did what he told them to do, etc. It felt increasingly uncomfortable. So after a while I started confronting my sponsor with the things that I thought were wrong. But he always seemed to have a great explanation for why he spoke and acted the way he did.

Before I knew it I was also pushed into three different service positions. Receiving dozens of text messages a week, at all hours of the day. Telling me what to do, what to write, what to say, what to pray, etc. It felt increasingly uncomfortable, intimidating even. As I saw his increasingly controlling and manipulating behavioral pattern become more evident, I felt it was time to break with my sponsor. I mustered the courage to confront him and ask him to not contact me anymore, which he ignored at first. I felt used and abused. A weird mix of disappointment and shame came over me. Needless to say, I started beating myself up. How could I have been so dumb not to see this from day one?! Luckily I did not keep it to myself for too long and contacted other experienced fellows. Some of them even told me the same had happened to them with the same person. Sad but true.

Now looking back at my 13th Step experience I am even grateful it happened to me. It showed me many things about myself. My fear of authority figures. My deep desire to be recognized and acknowledged. My need to be in control and master things quickly. All of these things have been brought to my attention in the most unexpected and confronting way. Although painful at first, now I understand why. I know better now. Trust your gut. Trust yourself. Take it easy. One day at a time. Progress rather than perfection...

**Example 5: Sponsorship and the 13<sup>th</sup> Step**

*He was like a predator and I was his prey.* When I started in ACA, an experienced fellow started sending me messages. When I asked him how to start with a sponsor, he said he wanted to be my sponsor. It did not feel good, but I felt I had no choice. I just started. I assumed this was the way things go in ACA. I told him I had doubts about sharing things with him because he was a man, and I that I would feel more at ease with a woman. He said there were almost no female sponsors around and it would be good for me to overcome my anxiety with men. I could practice with him. At that time I was passive and had problems with authority figures. I would have felt guilty if I had refused him as a sponsor. All of the 14 Laundry List traits were alive in my contact with him.

## *Appendix*

He asked me to send pictures of my holiday. It did not feel good but I sent him these pictures. I felt I had to do something in return for the things he did for me. I did not want to lose the contact. I had mixed feelings about anonymity. I thought ACA was about anonymity. That's why I came to the meetings and loved to share in the group. When I had doubts about sharing intimate things about my life with him he said I was isolating. I could not trust my own feelings. I assumed his arguments were right. I still feel ashamed that I let him set the rules.

We started working the steps using the yellow workbook. I learned a lot from him, and he helped me with difficult situations with my family, my work, and friends. He was a clever and experienced ACA fellow, but I never felt at ease. I felt he had other intentions. I managed not to let him come too close. It made me anxious. I was often angry and nervous. Something was wrong and I could not put my finger on it. He kept saying I was judgmental and harsh and I needed to open up, to relax and let go. He sent me messages each day. It did not feel good, but I did nothing because at the same time it felt good that he was so helpful and almost seemed to know what I was feeling. He was like a father figure I never had; my father was an alcoholic. I did not know what to do. Sometimes I set boundaries. After I did that he would not answer my messages for weeks. When we talked about it, he was angry. Then I felt abandoned. Sometimes after an ACA meeting that we had both attended, he would send messages telling me how beautiful I looked. I felt embarrassed and at the same time uplifted by his attention. The contact continued for 3 years. The final end came when he asked me to come over to his house. I told him this invitation felt unsafe.

I ended up switching groups and attending a different ACA meeting. I feel much more at ease sharing without feeling his eyes resting upon me. I feel ashamed that I told him so many details about my personal life that I was not ready to share about and that he could manipulate me to do so. Later I heard he did this with other women as well. It proves my gut feeling was right. This experience taught me to take my gut feeling seriously and not doubt it anymore.