

Q and A on Running ACA In-Person Meetings

Some of these questions have been somewhat dealt with in some detail in other sections of this website. These answers are my perspective drawn from many years of attending meetings.

Q: Where are the best Locations in Ottawa for holding ACA Meetings?

A: In Ottawa, the best locations are found in the center town area. Everyone would love to have a meeting in their own neighbourhood, but this is impractical. At this time, the estimated membership in this region would only support one or two meetings. The meetings have to be located where the most members will attend. In the past, it was noted that members from opposite ends of the city would rarely attend a meeting at the other end. The center town was a good compromise for everyone. Another factor is the bus service is better here. Some members will not have vehicles. A third factor to consider is that the location has ample free parking nearby like perhaps it has its own parking lot. This is a big advantage for those coming from outside the Ottawa core region who will use cars to get here.

Q: What is the best attendance range for an ACA Meeting?

A: The optimum attendance is usually 8 to 10 but 6 to 12 is still good. The best purpose of an ACA meeting is for individuals to have a support group to recover with. Members interact with others, learn from them, and perhaps develop friendships with some of them. The main purpose of an ACA meeting is for individuals to have a support group to recover with. Members interact with others, learn from them, and perhaps develop friendships with some of them. When average attendance is under 6, the members can attain more intimacy, but it limits the exposure to more different members' sharing. When attendance is more than 12, because of the limited time available during the meeting, each participant will probably have less time to speak during the sharing period while desiring more. It can also be more difficult to establish an intimate connection with any one person because you are dealing with a large group rather than a few individuals.

Q: Why is it important to keep the meetings going for a long period?

A: Many new members will start attending meetings for awhile and then quit them. Work may have forced them to quit, or they will feel they do not need them anymore. Some members will resume the meetings after some time. They may be going through a personnel crisis or finally have the spare time to re-attend. If no meetings exist at a time that is suitable for them to attend, where do they go?

Q: Why is it necessary for the Ottawa ACA Organization to have an Intergroup or an operations committee?

A: The main purposes of this administration group is to a) assist others to establish new meetings and b) help existing meetings to survive for the long term.

The key positions to be filled either by the committee or each meeting will be:

- a) Co-ordinator or chair who will ensure that the operation of the committee runs smoothly.
- b) Treasurer and Co-treasurer who will take care of the finances. When using a bank or any other financial institution, they will insist on having at least 2 signatures on any legal document.
- c) Secretary who will create and store all documents.
- d) Location Booker who arranges the bookings for the meetings and signs the contracts. This person must be willing to give his/her personnel details for the legal contract. This person will also be the main contact for the rental agent.
- e) Webmaster who will manage the Inner Peace website. The website is usually the main contact point for newcomers to get information about the organisation.

All these positions will be run by volunteers who will hopefully stay for at least a year.

Q: Why is ACA not as strict as following rules as other 12 step groups such as AA, etc.

A: Unlike some other 12 step organisations, the Ottawa ACA organizations has decided that it should not be imposing strict rules on the groups but allow them some flexibility in running their meetings. The group will usually decide what is best for all its members. Adult children need to develop some responsibility and control over their own lives. If they feel uncomfortable attending a meeting because of its harsh rules, they will usually leave the meeting. The Ottawa ACA Intergroup does encourage the group to use the ACA Red Book but not remove them from the organisation if they do not follow it to the letter. Practice some flexibility.

Q: Why does ACA not have as many meetings in the region as AA or some other 12 step organizations?

A: The easy answer to this is that there are simply not nearly as many acknowledged members as in most other 12 step organizations in the region. Large organizations like AA or Alcoholics Anonymous might have hundreds or even thousands of members in a large city while ACA may only have a few dozen or less attending during any given period.

Q: What are ACA's concerns about having meetings in member's homes?

A: Holding meetings in member's homes occurs only rarely and because of special circumstances such as when a public venue is not available. Only members who have been attending regularly and who the hosting member feels comfortable with are invited to attend. ACA is very concerned about keeping its members safe and anonymous. Newcomers are not invited because we cannot determine the suitability of the individual fitting into the meetings, and it is safer for the group to meeting this person in a public neutral location. Occasionally, we get new members who are so dysfunctional that they just don't get along with rest of the membership and we must ask them to leave.

Q: Why does ACA not endorse any particular counsellor or firm to its members?

A: ACA does not have the expertise to determine the degree of dysfunction of any of its members and the suitability of any counsellor to treat them. Every member is different and may find certain treatments more effective than others depending on where they are in their recovery journey. Not all counsellors are the same. Some will diagnose a patient differently and some will take a different approach to treatment. In the end, only the patient can decide whether their counsellor is truly helping them or not.

Q: How do members eventually find their way into the ACA Group?

A: Almost every member I have met, began ACA while going through a personal crisis in their life. Rarely do they join before this because they can tolerate and perform adequately well in normal society with their dysfunction. Pain is one of the main motivators for people to want to change. At that time, they usually go looking for recovery. Sometimes they are directed to ACA through a friend and sometimes a counsellor will suggest they attend an ACA meeting while getting theory from them. Recovering with a group can have many benefits.

Q: Why join an ACA Group?

A: Individuals can learn a lot from the other members while listening to their stories which may help the new attendee find some of their faults and discover recovery technics which may help them. A group also provides valuable moral support since the other members have probably gone through many of the same situations and can relate to the person's history.