

RUNNING AN ADULT CHILDREN MEETING

To successfully run an Adult Children Anonymous meeting according to what the Ottawa (Canada) Inner Peace Group has learned through the (40) years it has operated, you must have the following:

A suitable place for the group to meet.:

This location should be convenient to find and travel to. In a large city like Ottawa, the best locations would be in or near the center of city, where the local transportation system is at its best. Placing a meeting at one edge of the city discourages people at the opposite edge from attending because of the travel time involved. Another advantage is to have plenty of free parking nearby for member's cars.

Unless this site has a financial backer of some sort, (church, individual sponsor, etc.) you will need to raise money to pay the rent and the liability insurance some renters will require. In Ottawa, the insurance companies typically wanted \$2 million dollars worth of insurance which we found would cost between \$1000 to \$1200 a year, which is too much for small groups (under 12) to afford unless they charge a mandatory fee to attend.

In Ottawa we found that city run facilities (community centres, public halls, etc.) were the most affordable and we were covered under the city's rental insurance. The rent for small groups (up to 15 persons) for non-profit organizations such as 12-step groups, etc. was reasonable at \$15 to \$20 for 2 hours for a small room Please note: the facility manager will require proof that you are indeed a non-profit organization. However, before you book into any city facility, I would recommend having one of your members personally check out the room you are about to rent to see if it is suitable.

In the fall of 2008, when our organisation was forced to leave St. Paul University, a committee was set up to investigate new locations for the meetings. We found there was a big difference of cleanliness, privacy, and comfort found at the many city facilities we looked at. We also found that many city centres were heavily booked with other activities and we could not secure a consistent long-term booking there. The members wanted a regular continuing time and place for their weekly meetings. The one problem we had with the Brewer Pool facility was that we could not hold meetings on holiday Mondays and the building would shutdown for 3 weeks every August/September for pool maintenance. However, many members liked meetings on Mondays (least busy evening of the week) and Brewer was available and had more advantages than most locations.

The necessary funds to sustain the group meetings:

You will need funds and a treasurer to manage these funds for the expenses that will incur. Besides the rental of the space, other expenses could be insurance, printing costs for meeting and gift literature, meeting books, rental fees to run an on-line meeting or a group website (like Ottawa's Inner Peace site).

Most of this money will come from in-meeting 7th Tradition contributions from your attendees. To accept checks would require having a bank account to deposit them into. Your treasurer may desire to have all funds deposited into a bank account. Our experience with banks in Ottawa is that the recent bank charges on these accounts usual outweighs the benefits of having one, but it does allow the group to write and receive checks. The Ottawa groups rarely had more than \$500 in their accounts at any time. Some banks do not like having accounts this small as it does not allow the bank to make a substantial profit off them.

The required volunteers to manage the group meetings:

You will need volunteers to chair the meeting and lead the sharing group within the meeting. This usually is best done by a veteran who has the experience and confidence on how to do it well, but a newcomer could perform it with some coaching.

It is recommended to have a volunteer group of at least 3 persons to supply backups in case some volunteers may become unavailable to attend a meeting. In the past some Ottawa Groups simply folded because they had no more members to run the meetings at certain locations.

Some factors that will determine how successful the meetings will be:

Depending on the size of the meeting space, there will be an optimum number of attendees. If the average (over a few months) participation is too low, the group may run out of the funds necessary to pay its expenses. The advantage is that each person will have more speaking time during the sharing period. If however, there are too many people, the sharing time each member gets may be unsatisfactory for many of them. Not allowing each person enough time to speak could result in some members quitting the group because it is not worth their time and effort to attend.

The past Ottawa groups would aim for a one hour sharing period (with a bit of reading) with everyone getting at least 5 minutes to share if they wish to. This factor may need to be adjusted during the COVID-19 situation due to social distancing measures.

Just before the Covid shutdown, the Inner Peace ACA group was averaging an attendance of 6 to 10 which enabled us to hold meetings in a room with a maximum capacity of 15 (the rental space of most city-run meeting rooms). We have noted in our Ottawa organization, that when a meeting's average attendance (over a few months) drops to 4 or below the meeting is probably in a situation where it will fold within a few months.

Some other factors that may help the meetings will be successful:

Another important factor to be considered, is how to keep the meeting comfortable for most of its members. Many adult children become anxious when conflict occurs during a meeting, if this clash becomes serious, some individuals may leave the group rather than tolerate or confront the difficult situation. This rare condition usually happens when a member(s) attempts to control or threaten the group. A long-time veteran is usually a good source of information concerning running the meetings and what to do when problems arise within the group. This veteran should act as if they are a facilitator and not as a leader.

Another highly recommended suggestion concerns changing the details of the meetings unless absolutely required. Adult Children hate changes especially unexpected ones. Any changes of the meeting should involve a group vote held over at least 4 consecutive weekly meetings. Every member should be allowed only one vote over that entire period. Why! because of the nature of ACA meetings the attendance at any meeting can vary significantly from one week to another. The group at one meeting could vote for changes only to have a following meeting change them back. It should not be too easy to change things and it allows members to consider it,

However, the exception would be moving temporarily the meeting's location when necessary (like a facility closure). In this case it would be advisably to allow your booker some discretion in finding another location. (he/she may have few last-minute options).

A convenient but not necessary factor is being able to store the group's materials in a secure place or locker between meetings. If the meeting's facility has storage lockers. then, they do not have to be hauled to the meeting every week. It is recommended not to keep any valuables or money in this location, and this may require a rental fee. However, if the group decides only to use the ACA red book or a small amount of reading material, then the locker may not be necessary.

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