

group conscience. In these group discussions, the focus is on creating an environment where members can share safely and find and maintain sobriety. In any situation, if a person's safety is in jeopardy or the situation breaches the law, the individuals involved can take appropriate action to ensure their safety. Calling the proper authorities does not go against any A.A. Traditions. Anonymity is not a cloak protecting criminal or inappropriate behavior.

Dealing with Disruptions

While most groups operate with a healthy balance of spontaneity and structure, others have experienced situations that can threaten group unity and challenge the safety of the group and its members. One such situation is a disruptive person whose behavior inhibits the group's ability to carry out its primary purpose. Members exhibiting such disruptive behavior may be asked by the group to stop attending that particular meeting for a period of time. In-person and virtual groups dealing with these kinds of disruptions make such a request to preserve the common welfare of the group and to maintain A.A. unity, recognizing that no A.A. group can bar any individual from equal membership in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Some groups have developed plans for addressing disruptive behavior and have established procedures through their group conscience to ensure that the group's welfare is protected. In many cases, disruptive behavior is preempted by having the chairperson state some reasonable expectations for the functioning of the group. Some groups include in their opening announcements that disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. For clarity, some groups have listed examples of the group's definition of these behaviors. When necessary, groups and members always have the option to call the appropriate authorities if disruptive behavior escalates to violence or harassment, or if someone's safety is at risk.

A.A. and the Law

Common sense and experience suggest that A.A. membership does not grant immunity from the law or local regulations and that being at an A.A. meeting does not put anyone beyond the jurisdiction of law enforcement. As individuals, A.A. members are also "citizens of the world," and as citizens we are not above the law.

Any activity within an A.A. group's meeting is subject to the same laws and local regulations that apply outside the group's meeting. Through the group conscience process, many groups have established guidelines regarding when it may be appropriate to call authorities to handle a given situation. Situations that groups have faced include, but are not limited to, violence, embezzlement, theft of property, drug sales at a meeting, and more. However, neither the list of possible situations nor the guidelines are meant to cover every scenario. While A.A. members and groups can be caring and supportive to those affected, we are not professionals trained to handle such situations. Law enforcement or other professional help may be necessary. Members should contact the authorities if they feel that their safety is at risk.

