

# Information for Educators



## Alateen Meetings In Schools

If you are considering starting an Alateen group within your school, this information could be helpful. Included are answers to basic questions that educators and school administrators most frequently ask. The answers are based on the experience of school personnel, members of the Al-Anon and Alateen program and students who attend Alateen meetings in schools.

### How Will the Student Benefit from an Alateen Meeting in School?



The disease of alcoholism in a family member or friend affects children and teenagers in many different ways that impact on their behavior and ultimately, their school work. Frequently, students and educators do not realize that a relationship with an alcoholic could be a factor.

Alateen, an integral part of the Al-Anon Family Groups, is a fellowship of young people whose lives have been affected by alcoholism in a family member or friend. Alateen helps young people understand how alcoholism affects the lives of all who are associated with a problem drinker.

Alateen members meet to discuss their common problems, share experience, and encourage one another. They help each other learn effective ways of dealing with their personal problems by using the principles of the Al-Anon/Alateen program.

Alateen meetings in schools have been extremely successful in many areas of the US and Canada. Some children and teens don't have an opportunity to get to a meeting outside of the school environment because of age, time, place, and home-life situations. In addition, public or private transportation may not be available, particularly in rural areas.

### Is Alateen a Religious Program?

Alateen is not a religious program. Religion, outside organizations, and counseling are not discussed in the meetings. There is recognition of a "Power greater than ourselves." The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alateen do contain the word "God" as a universal term for a Higher Power. Al-Anon/Alateen does not require that an opening or closing prayer be said.

### Does Al-Anon Provide Adult Supervision in an Alateen Meeting?

Yes, Alateen is a part of Al-Anon. Al-Anon members sponsor Alateen groups sharing their experience, strength, and hope of having been affected by someone's drinking and their recovery in Al-Anon. In order to be registered as an Alateen group, there must be an Alateen sponsor at each meeting (two are recommended) who is at least 21 years old and who has been attending Al-Anon meetings for a minimum of two years.

School personnel who are also Al-Anon members may serve as sponsors. Experience has shown that Alateen members in meetings sponsored by school staff experience more difficulty in establishing the trust necessary between member and sponsor.

### What If Staff Members are Required to be Present?

If a staff member must be in attendance because of school policy, the Alateen members are told that staff members are required by law to report certain types of information to the appropriate authority. In keeping with Alateen mutual support policies, an Alateen meeting is not an opportunity for staff to counsel students. It is essential for staff members to safeguard the anonymity and confidentiality of Alateen members. An open mind and a quiet presence is most instrumental for the Alateens to succeed.

## When Is the Best Time To Schedule an Alateen Meeting?

Many schools have the meetings on a rotating schedule so students do not miss the same class each week. Attendance at the Alateen meeting is considered the same as attendance at a class. In some



schools, students are issued a pass “to the guidance office” for the specified time of the Alateen meeting. This procedure maintains the anonymity of the student. Once at the meeting, students sign in and sign out when they leave the meeting. The sponsors return the in/out sheet to the guidance office at the conclusion of the meeting. This prevents “skips.” In keeping with the principles of the Alateen program, the students are responsible for their own attendance and must face the consequences predetermined by the school for cutting class. Students are informed that scheduled tests or events mandated by school personnel take priority over attending an Alateen meeting.

The experience at some schools reveals that meetings held before school, during lunch hours, and after school have a lower rate of attendance. Furthermore, the student’s anonymity becomes compromised if they are seen before or after school hours or are not seen by their peers during lunchtime.

Anonymity of the students is an essential factor in deciding on the location and scheduled time of meetings.

## How Can the Anonymity of the Student be Maintained when Parental Permission is Required ?

When parental permission for certain age-level students is required, some schools have used a blanket permission form. The form might read: “Our school offers many programs for our students. Please indicate in the space provided if you do not want your child attending a particular program with the word NO, sign and return this form.” A description of Alateen is clearly listed. This method has been successfully used for years by some schools and maintains the anonymity of the student by listing all school programs.

### Further Information

Schools can use Alateen literature within other types of meetings. The meeting cannot be identified or registered as an Alateen meeting without an Al-Anon member as a sponsor.

The Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. World Service Office (WSO) provides information about starting and maintaining an Alateen group. Local Al-Anon groups are also resources for information as well as sources of Al-Anon sponsors. Publications are available from the WSO, local Al-Anon groups, Al-Anon literature distribution centers and information services. A catalog of literature and a listing of local services may be obtained through the WSO.

Information about Al-Anon and Alateen can be presented to schools by means of:

- Faculty workshops
- School assemblies & health fairs
- Articles in school newspapers

The Alateen coordinator in your state or province can help you by providing local resource information.

## Suggested Reading

- Alateen—Hope for Children of Alcoholics* (B-3)
- Alateen—a day at a time* (B-10)
- Courage to Be Me - Living With Alcoholism* (B-23)
- Living Today in Alateen* (B-26)
- A Guide to Alateen Sponsorship - An Unforgettable Adventure* (P-86)
- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions for Alateen* (P-18)
- Youth and the Alcoholic Parent* (P-21)
- Facts About Alateen* (P-41)
- Moving On! From Alateen to Al-Anon* (P-59)

## Who to Contact for Guidance

The Al-Anon area delegate will furnish the name of a local representative who will work with you in establishing an Alateen meeting and in providing resources. To obtain the name of the area delegate, see the address and numbers listed below.

**Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.**  
**World Service Office**  
1600 Corporate Landing Parkway  
Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617  
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