

2020

*Winter
Newsletter*

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

BRIDGING

THE

GAP

TEMPORARY CONTACTS

**FROM YOUR ALTERNATE COORDINATOR
LAURA S., Minneapolis MN**

For many of us, our familiar ways of bridging the gap seem like distant memories. However, one thing remains very much the same: Inside AAs are leaving facilities with or without outside AA members serving as their temporary contacts. It is our responsibility to remain focused on connecting inside AAs with outside Alcoholics Anonymous through temporary contacts. Our work is about keeping our fellows from falling through the cracks and onto the slippery slope.

The questions for us is, what new and possibly untried ways can we implement to bridge the gap? How can we share our bridging the gap program information in ways we haven't used before? What innovative approaches we can try? Many areas and district committees are availing themselves of technological advances to bridge the gap. In Minnesota, the temporary contact committee created a video to be broadcast during virtual prerelease events while another committee has had success presenting online AA information in treatment centers. Many of us are finding facilities are open to us if we are willing to use the same technology they use. Ask your facilities' coordinators and discharge/release planners how you can work with them to make successful transitions to the outside community. We share the same primary concern—successful transitions from the facility to the outside community. In our case that means connecting inside alcoholics with outside Alcoholics Anonymous.

Bill writes in Our Great Responsibility, "My sponsor sits across the kitchen table on which there was no

coffee—in those days it was gin—and the unique communications starts; One drunk talking with another. So, it has been a story of communication. ...But our manner of communication, our manner of organizing ourselves for function, for service—let us hope that this goes on changing for the better, forever."

The way we bridge the gap in a Covid-19 and the post-pandemic world will look different than it did yesterday. **The hope of AAs leaving facilities may be in our open mindedness and ability to tap into untried methods**

One of the ways we can be helpful to each other is to share what is working in the next newsletter (contact) me at coordinator@btgww.org or post on our Slack channel (see this edition for more information).

In Grateful Service,
Laura S.

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FROM YOUR WEB ADMINISTRATOR
CHERI J., Kansas City MO

Hi Everyone

One of the best parts of the workshop weekend is seeing old friends and making new ones. It is hearing about areas and districts starting new bridge the gap committees. It is hearing the report about what is going on at GSO with Bridging the Gap and following the conference as they look into expanding the BTG language to include corrections. This year we missed all that - and more.

If you haven't read this year's conference report, I have grabbed everything about bridging the gap that i could find. It's not a substitute for in person reports, or hugs, but it does reaffirm that bridging the gap is still active and still growing.

Virtual Hugs,
Cheri J.

Trustees' Committees and Staff Reports

TREATMENT

Review of Bridging the Gap Materials:

Following the 2019 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities, committee consideration on the Bridging the Gap pamphlet, the committee asked the secretary to work with the Publishing department on draft language.

A review was discussed of Treatment and Corrections materials from the General Service Office related to Bridging the Gap activities. The committee noted samples that demonstrated current and inclusive language and encompassed possible opportunities for Bridging the Gap and Temporary Contact services and agreed to forward the report to the 2020 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

Bridging the Gap Workbook:

The committee considered a request to create a Bridging the Gap Workbook and agreed to forward the request to the 2020 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities. The committee noted that some local A.A. communities do not participate in Bridging the Gap or Temporary Contact activities due to limited access of shared experience in this service area.

CORRECTIONS DESK – STAFF REPORT

One of the most gratifying aspects of the assignment is communicating with area and district Corrections, Hospitals and Institutions, and Bridging the Gap committees. The desk fields daily calls and emails from A.A. members doing corrections service work. In 2019, we passed along to area corrections committee chairs 299 requests from inmates, corrections professionals, and A.A. members taking meetings into correctional facilities for prerelease contacts, outside support, or A.A. literature.

Prerelease contacts help incarcerated alcoholics get acquainted and comfortable in A.A. in the community they are being released to. They are intended to be made three to six months prior to a release date. Requests from inmates are received by G.S.O. and forwarded to the appropriate area corrections chair. In 2019, we forwarded over 500 requests.

TREATMENT & ACCESSIBILITIES

Committee Considerations:

- The committee suggested that the trustees' C.P.C./T.A. committee develop a Bridging the Gap Committee Workbook and provide a progress report to the 2021 General Service Conference. The committee suggested that the shared experience included in the workbook include a list of BTG temporary contacts available from G.S.O.

- The committee reviewed the progress report “Review of Bridging the Gap Materials,” and felt it met the goal of the 2019 committee consideration. The committee related service materials, the trustees’ C.P.C./T.A. committee consider updating existing service materials to reflect the suggested language updates for currency and inclusion.
- The committee expressed support for use of a “Question and Answer” style in the content across the range of Bridging the Gap-related items. The committee also expressed support for the sample version of “A.A. Guidelines: Bridging the Gap/Temporary Contact Committees” included in the report.

Committee Recommendations:

The pamphlet “Bridging the Gap” be updated for currency and inclusion to reach a broader scope of treatment settings about temporary contact services, and that a progress report or draft be brought to the 2021 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

CORRECTIONS

A request from the 2019 Conference Committee on Corrections to gather shared experience from A.A. members involved in corrections service for tools currently being used to create local databases with correctional facilities meeting information was sent out to area, district, intergroup, hospital and institutions, corrections and Bridging the Gap committee chairs in early October.

It was noted that to date one response with a template used by a local area had been received. The committee agreed that providing the database as a tool to the Fellowship could be very helpful and suggested that the template be added to the Corrections Workbook at the next printing

The committee also reviewed a draft letter to professionals in the parole and probation field to raise awareness about local prerelease and Bridging the Gap A.A. services. The committee approved the content of the letter and agreed to include the letter in the Corrections Kit as a resource for Corrections Committees. Additionally, the committee asked the staff secretary to explore options for a mailing of the letter from G.S.O. and to provide a report at an upcoming meeting of the committee. It was also noted that the Corrections desk and the Publishing department collaborated on a letter to professionals regarding Prerelease and Bridging the Gap services to give it a more professional presentation. The letter will be added to the Corrections Kit as service material.

AREA REPORTS

Ontario – Area 86

We have nine subcommittees, with the newest being Bridging the Gap. This is proving to be a very busy committee with almost all 23 districts now having a BTG chair.

Northern Illinois – Area 20

We have ten service committees and the newest is Bridging the Gap.

Manitoba – Area 80

We have ... as well as a second-to-none Bridging the Gap team!

Nebraska – Area 41

The treatment committee has worked diligently to revive Bridging the Gap in our state. They continue to find new contacts for their list and it again has a heartbeat in Area 41.

South Carolina – Area 62

We started a Bridging the Gap ad hoc committee after a suggestion from our corrections and treatment committee chairpersons to better serve A.A.

**FROM YOU ARCHIVIST
CRAIG B., St. Louis MO**

**EVER WONDER WHERE BTGWWs HAVE TAKEN PLACE FOR THE LAST 30 YEARS?
WOULD YOU LIKE TO HOST BTGWW IN 2022? 2023?**

1991 Des Moines IA	1992 Des Moines IA	1993 Des Moines IA
1994 Cleveland OH	1995 Cleveland OH	1996 St Louis MO
1997 Milwaukee WI	1998 Chicago IL	1999 Omaha NE
2000 Kansas City MO	2001 Denver CO	2002 Minneapolis MN
2003 Chicago IL	2004 Sandusky OH	2005 St Joseph MO
2006 Salt Lake City UT	2007 White River Jct. VT	2008 Kansas City MO
2009 Kansas City MO	2010 Minneapolis MN	2011 Sacramento CA
2012 Minneapolis MN	2013 Chicago IL	2014 Kansas City MO
2015 Salt Lake City UT	2016 Tucson AZ	2017 Minneapolis MN
2018 Denver CO	2019 Sacramento CA	2020 Postponed until 2021 Rock Island ILL
2021 Rock Island IL	2022 ?	2023 ?

BTGWW OFFICERS		
Dan L. Coordinator coordinator@btgww.org		2020-2021
Laura S. Alternate Coordinator altcoordinator@btgww.org		2020-2021
Cheri J. Web Administrator webmaster@btgww.org		Non-rotating
Craig B. Archivist archivist@btgww.org		Non-rotating



**SPRING ONLINE BTGWW
WORKSHOP WEEKEND**

-See Page 10-

NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION **By Woody R., California Northern Interior**

When I was asked to contribute an article to this newsletter I immediately said yes. My excitement soon abated as I began to think about what I could share about. So many thoughts ran through my head. We are experiencing new and interesting times. Business as usual was no longer possible. Services committees now faced new twelve step work challenges.

Necessity is the mother of invention. Not too long ago the idea of A.A. meetings using virtual platforms met with an overall general resistance from the fellowship despite its successful use in remote communities. In the face of a widespread shutdown of face-to-face meetings the fellowship began to slowly shed its apprehensions of this technology and A.A. as a whole entered into a new era full of new and creative ways to carry the message to those who don't know there is a way out.

About fourteen years ago I began my involvement with the Bridging the Gap Workshop Weekend. The number of Committee Chairs and Areas that attended the weekend varied based on location and cost. We now have, through the use of a virtual platform, the opportunity to share experiences with our local and Area committees without the monetary and geographical barriers that existed before. I recently attended the Bridging the Gap Between Treatment and AA Zoom mini convention in September. This was an international event, and the panels were outstanding. Bridging the Gap is functioning worldwide – Amazing! What does the future hold? What new and innovative ways lay before us?

The Treatment and Accessibilities Committee suggested that the C.P.C. / T.A committee develop a Bridging the Gap Committee Workbook with the

possible inclusion of a list of BTG temporary contacts available from G.S.O. The committee also expressed support for a sample version of A.A. Guidelines: Bridging the Gap/Temporary Contact Committees to be included in the workbook. The Bridging the Gap Workshop Weekend helped to make these things happened.

An excerpt from a recent letter from the Treatment Facilities Desk at G.S.O. said:

“In today’s world, alcoholics from all walks of life participate in, or are confined to many types of Treatment, Correctional, Medical, Therapeutic, Crisis or Community settings. They all leave that place at some point, but some are looking for an A.A contact to help them get involved and become a part of the A.A. Fellowship to maintain their sobriety on the outside.”

I interpret this statement as saying we can expand our service beyond treatment and correctional facilities to CPC and PI events such as drunk driving schools, mental health and substance abuse fairs. Just before the pandemic hit our local BTG committee made its services available to clients sentenced to our County’s Drunk Driving School and required to attend a specific number of A.A. meetings per month. This offer was warmly received by the counselors and more importantly by those clients wary of attending an A.A. meeting by themselves.

It is now possible, because of the pandemic, to give Bridging the Gap presentations using virtual platforms. The possibilities for new and effective ways to carry the A.A. message through BTG are endless. You and your local committee hold the key, through the sharing of your local experience, you can be the catalyst in the development of new and effective ways to assist the suffering Alcoholic find a useful and happy life without alcohol. Get involved and participate in the process.

ACRONYMS AND LOOKING AHEAD

By Terry L., Victoria MN

I have always enjoyed acronyms and we have no shortage of them! BTG, BTGWW, H&I, TCP, CFCP, TFC, CFC, CPC, PI all great acronyms expressing our enthusiasm for carrying the message and helping an AA prospect, a newcomer to get to us (acronyms defined below)

I was introduced to BTG and TCP by Cheryl Ann B. from GSO when she did a presentation on the TF Workbook at the 1987 FORUM in Fargo, ND. I went home to Minneapolis to help start our BTG work with our TCP and AAI Presentations. Over the next few years many new BTG programs started around the US and Canada.

Close to 30 years ago on a Friday morning I loaded up my car with all our BTGWW materials and a weekend's worth of suits, shirts and ties and headed to Des Moines to rendezvous with my partner, Rod Brown from Des Moines and the rest of the team planning to put on the first BTGWW! We were all very excited. Thanks to our listing in the Grapevine event calendar and to mailings done to lists of hundreds of AA service workers, we had received registrations from all over the country.

The agenda was largely built around participants who had preregistered and who agreed to share experience on how BTG was working in their geography. It also included awareness mentions and readings from materials that help to define BTG and also serve as tools in our work. All participants were asked to bring their information and materials to share with everyone else. That is how the BTG Resources Library began – it filled quickly with local materials, formats, flyers and pamphlets. Craig B. from St Louis became our Archivist, and he is still today! We had an egg timer and a walking cane to help prevent over runs with our many, many 10-minute talks.

The weekend was deemed to be successful and valuable in helping AA's everywhere to start and

improve their BTG 12th Step work. The early events were all in Des Moines coordinated by the same team of dedicated BTG AA's. Then we "matured" and started electing coordinators and bidding for host locations. Since the beginning we have gathered 29 times in the Fall for long weekends of sharing in hotels all over the country. Sad to have not been able to come together in 2020 due to COVID-19 ... the trip to Eastern Iowa will be fun next year!

As we learn to deal with the issues of COVID most of us have found that doing AA Information Presentations by Video Technology (Zoom, or the likes) and offering Temporary Contacts still works in helping new prospects to get and stay sober in AA. I personally do an AAI at the Minneapolis Veterans Administration Addiction Recovery Service every 4 weeks, where we let the clients know what AA is and is not, and we offer a temporary contact.

I am always happy to visit with fellow AA's about any or all of these cool acronyms! Keep up the good work and pass it on to the newer members!

Terry L.

AAI – Alcoholics Anonymous Information

BTG – Bridge The Gap

BTGWW – Bridge The Gap Workshop Weekend

CFCP – Correctional Facilities Contact Program

CFC – Corrections Facilities Committee

CPC – Cooperation with the Professional Community

GSO – General Service Office

H&I – Hospitals and Institutions (committee/work)

PI – Public Information

TCP – Temporary Contact Program (Treatment)

TFC – Treatment Facilities Committee

A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

By Rick M., Roseville CA

I was a year and a half sober, open minded to how others were doing sobriety and what it brought them. Two members of my home group, Matthew L. and Betsy J. were wonderful examples of what the promises bring us in recovery. They were Bridging the Gap (BTG) chair and co-chair at our district level. I wanted what they had so I volunteered to do BTG 12-step work.

I was fortunate to have been called many times to meet prospects being released from jails and treatment centers. Reaching out to fellow alcoholics to help them on their journey of recovery is always a spiritual experience.

After six years as a 12-step volunteer I made myself available to serve as the BTG chairperson for our district. Fortunately, Jane B. volunteered to be the volunteer coordinator and we were off to a running start. We had enthusiasm, focus and a lot of support from our district.

We were given a document called, BTG How It Works, a 16-page layout of how to organize and structure BTG at the district level. There were 15 service positions that needed to fill in order to fully get up and running, so we decided to have a "BTG kick-off meeting" to hopefully bring in volunteers.

We announced the BTG kick-off meeting at all of our AA meetings and at district meetings. We put together email lists from meeting phone lists and sent emails to hundreds of people to spread the word of the need for volunteers. Finally, on a cold, rainy and windy Saturday morning in January we held our kick-off meeting. Much to our amazement the large meeting hall was packed. We did our presentations and then came the call-out for volunteers. Thanks to our Higher Power, we were able to fill all 15 of our volunteer positions that

morning. Totally in awe, I turned to Matthew and gave him a look of amazement. He said, "You don't think people are going to show up on a cold, rainy and windy Saturday morning and not volunteer, do you?" I laughed and was filled with gratitude.

When making the announcements, a fellow AA-er named Frank C. heard us and started asking about BTG. At that time, he had 25 years of sobriety and had been a drug and alcohol counselor for many years. Frank had never heard of BTG. This was shocking to me but was a good example of how much we needed to do. Obviously, we needed to focus on how to make BTG known at all levels, in AA meetings, jails and treatment facilities.

We started with designing posters, brochures, BTG business cards and flyers. We continued to announce BTG in meetings, but now we had BTG posters with brochures attached for people to read and hand out. We had both a verbal and a visual presence for BTG in our meetings. We went to business meetings of fellowships in our district to ask if we could hang the BTG "We Need You" poster to recruit new volunteers. We contacted administrators at the county jail who were very supportive and allowed us to hang our posters with brochures in each of the county jails to make BTG known to inmates. We contacted treatment facilities located in our district and were able to hang BTG posters with brochures in treatment facilities throughout the county to help make BTG known to recovering alcoholics. We were given permission by our district to have our flyer posted to their website to attract new AA volunteers for BTG. We gave presentations at AA events such as Unity Day, and district and area workshops to attract new volunteers. Each month, we visited districts throughout the California Northern Interior Area (CNIA) giving presentations and sharing our posters and brochures, to help get BTG established in other districts. We added a Google Voice phone number to our posters and brochures so inmates and people in treatment facilities could call us directly upon their release.

Then came BTGWW and I traveled to Minneapolis Minnesota. I called Matthew L., the coordinator of the event that year, and asked if I could do anything to be of service to him. All he said was, "Just bring your stuff." I called him again, just before leaving for Minneapolis. I again asked if I could do anything to be of service to him. Again, all he said was, "Just bring your stuff." Saturday morning, on the day of the workshop, I asked if I could do anything to be of service to him, he said, "Just be ready." Then came Saturday afternoon and one of the speakers couldn't make it. Matthew turned to me and said, "You're on." I grabbed my posters and brochures and stepped up to the microphone. Without having prepared or planned my presentation for BTGWW I just smiled and gave my regular BTG presentation. The sound system had issues, but I just kept on talking. After I had finished, people hurried to the table to look at the posters and brochures, they took out their phones

VIRTUAL BTGWW!

By Diana A., San Diego CA

Many of you know that I spend my winters in San Diego (Area 08 District 21) and my summers in the Eastern UP of Michigan (Area 34 District 16). Covid 19 notwithstanding, this year was no exception. I arrived on June 18th and had transportation from the airport to my home thanks to an AA friend and her husband, who took my car from the house to the airport and left it there for me to collect on my arrival.

This friend has been recently attending all her AA meetings online because her husband has "underlying conditions" and she is concerned. In one of her meetings, she met a newcomer who announced that she was living "on Drummond Island" – which is where I live in the summer. The meeting originated out of upstate New York – nowhere near where the three of us are!!!!

and took pictures of them. The trustee from GSO politely asked me if I wouldn't mind sharing these items with GSO. I was in tears of gratitude. A couple weeks later, the same trustee called me to ask questions about our BTG journey. I filled him in with many details and sent him copies of our posters, brochures, business cards and flyers to be shared with anyone who might ask.

Over the past few years, we have received numerous inquiries from people in service to BTG from many parts of the United States and Canada. They have requested copies of our items from GSO to use in their own districts to further their outreach to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Bridging the Gap has offered me a journey in recovery filled with spiritual experiences. Thank you, God for Bridging the Gap. Thank you, God for Alcoholics Anonymous.

My friend (after checking with me) gave my phone number to the newcomer. And the newcomer called!!! She has just recently moved here from the Los Angeles area, and had gotten sober after "the shutdown", so had only attended meetings on Zoom. There are a couple of meetings here that are "in person" meetings.

I was able to take the newcomer to two meetings that first week. In addition, we have a kayaking interest in common, so we have been able to go kayaking a couple of times. She and I now regularly attend the Monday night meeting – meeting up, carpooling, and getting a soft-serve ice cream cone before the meeting. Looks just like "old fashioned AA".

I am still doing the volunteer coordinator position for the Contact on Release Committee (read BTG) in San Diego, but I can also be a BTG volunteer on Drummond Island! I love Bridging the Gap!



BTGWW

- Threads
- Mentions & reactions
- Drafts
- Saved Items
- People
- Apps
- Files
- Show less
- Channels +
- Direct messages +
- Invite people
- Apps +

Don't forget the Bridging the Gap Workshop Weekend Slack Chanel.

**Lots of things are changing as we are finding
new ways to help people being released from
facilities get to their first AA meeting.**

**Share your experience and learn what others
are doing as we find our new normal for
carrying the AA message. It's also a great
place for questions, answers and general
conversations that all build the fellowship.**

**If you aren't already signed up send an email
to webmaster@btgww.org and you will receive
an invitation to join.**

Last year we set up a Slack workspace for BTGWW. You can share what you are doing, what has worked and what hasn't, in real time.

The Slack workspace is available to any AA member.

**- Special Workshop -
Everything you wanted to know about
Bridging the Gap but were afraid to ask**

Coming this Spring to a device near you...

VIRTUAL BTGWW



“...sweeping changes in society as a whole are reflected in new customs and practices within the Fellowship. Taking advantage of technological advances, for example, AA members with computers can participate in meetings online, sharing with alcoholics across the country or around the world. In meetings, anywhere, AAs share experience, strength, and hope with each other in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics. Modem-to-modem or face-face, AAs speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity.”
Alcoholics Anonymous, Forward to the Fourth Edition, page xxiv.