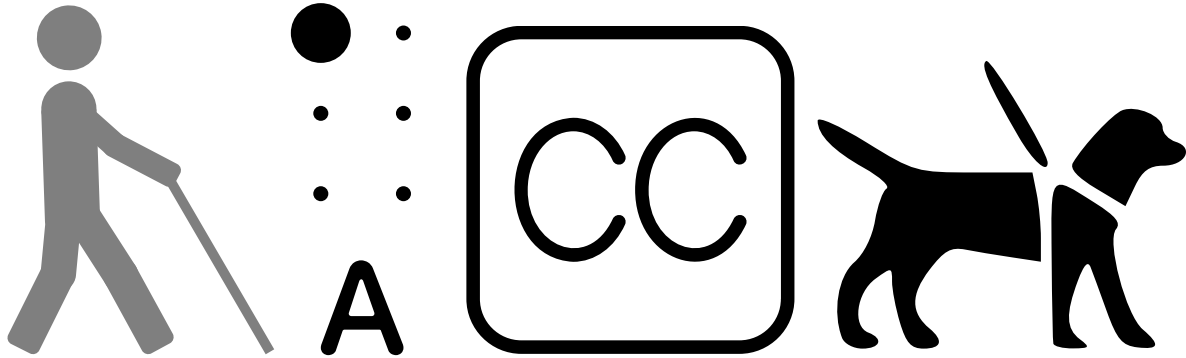


Access 360

A special series of the CNIA 07 Accessibilities Committee



September 2025

Blind Members and A.A.

Accessibilities asked via survey at the Panel 74 Pre-Conference Assembly in Gazelle how we could best support your District and your requests for **informational presentations (85%)** and **accessibilities speakers (50%)** topped the list.

This special newsletter series is a first step toward addressing both of those expressed needs by offering the shared experience of members who encounter one or more challenges while trying to access A.A. meetings, literature, service opportunities and/or fellowship.

In each Access-themed issue, you'll find a member share, list of GSO accessibilities resources for members, a Q&A section, a glossary of accessibility-relevant terms and a calendar of upcoming Accessibilities-related events. With your participation, we'd like to develop a peer sharing section called District to District/Group to Group (D2D/G2G), which you can read more about in this issue.

It was at the Pre-Conference Assembly that I first met Ron, a blind A.A. member within Area 07 who is serving as a GSR for his group. We talked about some of the Accessibilities challenges he encountered with voting procedures and restroom use as well as the supportive friends and fellow members who accompanied him to the Assembly.

I'm happy to introduce Ron, who has agreed to share his story in this first issue of Access 360. I hope you find the content of this newsletter useful to you on your 12-step journey and in your accessibilities service work.

Yours in service to making A.A. accessible to every alcoholic,

Claudia M., Accessibilities Chair

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“My name is Ron, and I am an alcoholic of the blind type”

I would like to give a big thank you to Alcoholics Anonymous, without which I would not be sober today.

On April 20, 2004, I was in a work accident that left me totally blind. My name is Ron, and I am an alcoholic of the blind type. I am not an alcoholic because I am blind, and I am not blind because I am an alcoholic. I am just a blind alcoholic. The reason I say this is because my problems with alcohol started long before I lost my eyesight. This is a realization I came to only through good sponsorship and thoroughly doing the Twelve Steps.

I was born in Oakland, California and spent my teenage years there. Oakland is not why I became alcoholic, but it is where I learned the style of drinking that led to my alcoholism. Hanging out in the hood we always drank for the effect. Before I turned 21 years old, I was married, divorced and had a beautiful baby girl. The marriage ended as a direct result of my drinking.

The beginning of “A Vision for You” in Chapter 11 of the Big Book down to The Four Horsemen describes my progression into alcoholism. From 1978 to the accident in 2004 the progression was slow enough that I felt I could control my drinking. After the accident that left me blind, I drank with a whole new purpose and the progression sped up dramatically. I tried most of the methods mentioned in “More About Alcoholism,” which all led to still more pitiful, incomprehensible demoralization.

Ten days after the work accident, I woke up in the hospital and thought there were bandages over my eyes. Not only were there bandages, but I had no corneas or retinas in either of what was left of my eyeballs. At this stage of my journey, I knew nothing about blindness, and I knew no other blind people. I had no skills or any idea of what it would be like to survive as a blind person. And surviving was all I was interested in.

Orientation and mobility were strongly encouraged as part of my accident recovery, but at this stage I was coping with my blindness through the bottle. It took a good year after the accident before self-pity and heavy drinking really got ahold of me. During those first 15 years after losing my eyesight, I put in the minimum effort to survive and there was no controlling my drinking or my actions once I took the first drink.

Finally, on September 11, 2020, I woke up from what would be my last drunk. The overwhelming realization that my drinking was only going to get worse, never better, hit me hard. I called the AA hotline. The person who answered asked a little bit about me and I explained that I was blind. They sent somebody from special needs to see me and that man is still my sponsor today. During his visit he read the Doctor’s Opinion from the Big Book because I don’t read Braille quickly. (The statistics show that people who go blind later in life read Braille slowly). He asked me if I could stay sober until Wednesday (this was on a Sunday afternoon) and gave me his number. He said to stay in contact, don’t drink and that he would take me to a meeting Wednesday.

When he asked if I could stay sober until then, I said yes. However, after sharing this conversation with my wife, she was a bit more realistic about my chances of not drinking. The thing I did not mention was this was when COVID-19 had most in-person meetings shut down. Zoom was not suggested, and I knew nothing about it. My wife wanted me to stop drinking so badly that she went online and found the Fifth Street Fellowship was holding in-person meetings outside. So, off I went the next day.

I stayed sober until that first Wednesday, keeping in touch everyday with the man who came over (something I still do). My wife, who has been a great encouragement, found quite a few other in-person meetings for me to attend and so began my journey in A.A. I have never looked back nor regretted calling the hotline.

AA members have offered and provided rides and encouraged me to be in service and yet I feel many people are not aware of what we need as totally blind members to be of service. This is also very difficult without other agencies like The Society for The Blind, which has patiently taught me very advanced technology skills.

Bold and large text are great if you have a little eyesight but are of no value for those of us who do not. Audio books allow us to listen to AA literature, but they do not let us copy, paste or recite in portions what we remember. Reading The A.A. Preamble, How It Works, or The Twelve Traditions—something newcomers can and often do at meetings—are not an option for us.

“My name is Ron, and I am an alcoholic of the blind type”

Although there is still a lot that can be done by A.A. as-a-whole, the people I have met have gone above and beyond. I have come to know the meaning of the “we” in A.A. in a way I never imagined. No person does anything without help somewhere, sometime and in some way. The more we can make service in A.A. accessible, regardless of disability, the more we will feel like we are fully a part of Alcoholics Anonymous. The more accessible it is, the more we can effectively reach people with disabilities.

When this article is published, I will be celebrating Five years of sobriety. Thanks to all of you, and a willingness I never imagined, I have been able to secretary meetings, answer the hotline (something I still do), serve CCFAA as spokesperson for the meeting I still attend on Wednesdays, and actively serve as a GSR for that same meeting, which has opened the door for me to share my story with all of you. And to offer my hand to anybody who would like to know some of the things I do to participate in this great fellowship.

During my long years of drinking, it is only by the grace of GOD that I am here despite the things I have done while under the influence of “King Alcohol.” Today I’m grateful to say that surviving was a half measure compared to thriving, something only attainable if I do not drink. I am fortunate, grateful and blessed that A.A. is a “we” program and I never want to forget, unless I include “me,” there is no “we.”

Ron

General Service Office Service Material

The materials below are available from A.A. World Services and A.A. Grapevine/La Viña to support members facing accessibility barriers. Many of these resources are free on aa.org.

For Blind/Visually Impaired Members

Braille

- Alcoholics Anonymous (The Big Book) (M-34)
- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (M-35)
- Daily Reflections: A Book of Reflections by A.A. Members for A.A. Members (M-50)
- This is A.A. (M-63)
- Is A.A. for you? (M-64)
- Frequently Asked Questions about A.A. (M- 65)

Audio

- Alcoholics Anonymous “The Big Book”
- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
- Living Sober

Literature in Large Print

- Alcoholics Anonymous (B-16)
- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (B-14)
- As Bill Sees It (B-27)
- Living Sober (B-25)
- Daily Reflections (B-19)
- Came to Believe (B-26)
- A.A. for the Older Alcoholic (B-28)
- This is A.A. (P-56)
- Frequently Asked Questions About A.A. (P-57)

GRAPEVINE

- AA Grapevine YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/aagrapevine>
- AA Grapevine Podcast - <https://www.aagrapevine.org/podcast>
- AA Grapevine audiobooks/CDs - <https://www.aagrapevine.org/store/audiobooks-cds>
- AA Grapevine Magazine - <https://www.aagrapevine.org/magazine>



ASK ACCESSIBILITIES

Question

What advice can you give me regarding the pros and cons of dogs at AA meetings?

Thank you, Frank R.

Answer

Hi Frank,

Please see links to two websites below referring to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on this topic as well as some thoughts to consider regarding dogs (or other animals) in A.A. meetings.

There is a difference between a **service dog (in CA, only dogs can be service animals) trained to perform specific work or task(s) for a disabled person**, and other dogs. Service animals have a specific job to do and are trained to focus on their handler's needs; therefore, service dogs are socialized to perform appropriately in all types of contexts without growling, barking, biting or wandering off on their own. They remain with their handler at all times, usually either laying down or sitting next to the person. The two website links below provide a brief overview of ADA and CA law re: service animals, including the **two questions it is permissible to ask legally: 1) Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability? and 2) What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?**

Because every group is autonomous, the group conscience will need to determine its own policies. However, A.A.'s Third Tradition of inclusivity suggests that a member ought not be excluded if they require a service animal as long as they also have a desire to stop drinking. Regarding other types of animals in the meeting(s), it is probably prudent when discussing this at the group's business meeting to consider things like liability, common welfare of the membership, rate of occurrence (people bringing in dogs or other animals), the policies regarding animals at the facility where the meeting(s) is/are hosted, etc.

<https://www.ada.gov/topics/service-animals/>

<https://www.disabilityrightsca.org/publications/fact-sheet-service-animals-in-business-and-public-spaces#:~:text=Under%20the%20ADA%2C%20a%20service,use%20and%20train%20service%20animals>

(See Section B, both paragraphs)

Thank you for your question. This is an important topic and Accessibilities will dig into this further. It may be a good roundtable discussion topic to offer groups and districts in Area 07 as part of a best practices sharing session.

Glossary of Terms

Visual Impairment - A general term for any vision loss, ranging from low vision to total blindness.

Partial Blindness / Low Vision - Refers to a range of visual impairments where a person has some vision but it is not fully correctable with glasses, contact lenses or surgery.

Legal Blindness - Best-corrected visual acuity in the better eye is 20/200 or worse, or there is a severely restricted visual field (20 degrees or less). A functional definition used to determine eligibility for disability benefits and services.

Total Blindness - A complete absence of light perception.

Braille - A tactile system of writing and printing with raised dots, used by people who are blind.

Additional Ways to Categorize Blindness

BY CAUSE

- Age-related macular degeneration
- Glaucoma
- Cataracts
- Genetic Conditions

BY ONSET

- Congenital Blindness (present at birth)
- Acquired Blindness (developing later in life due to illness or injury)

Assistive Technology (AT) - Hardware or software designed to help people with disabilities perform tasks that they couldn't otherwise perform.

SOFTWARE & DIGITAL TOOLS

- **Screen Readers** - Software that reads digital text aloud using speech synthesis or converts it to a Braille display for tactile reading, allowing blind users to navigate computers, smartphones, and tablets.
- **Screen Magnifiers** - Software that enlarges text, images, and other elements on a screen, often with options to customize font sizes, colors, and cursors for people with low vision.
- **Optical Character Recognition (OCR)** - Technology that converts printed text into digital text, allowing screen readers to vocalize it.
- **Smart Phone and Tablet Apps** - Many apps are available that use a phone's camera to read text aloud, identify objects, or provide navigation.
- **Voice Activated Assistants** - Voice control features on devices like smart speakers (e.g., Siri) help with tasks like setting reminders, controlling smart home devices, and accessing information.

HARDWARE & PHYSICAL DEVICES

- **Braille Displays and Notetakers** - Devices that provide tactile Braille output for computer or digital text, as well as allowing users to take notes in Braille.
- **Video Magnifiers (CCTVs)** - Closed-circuit television systems with a camera and monitor that can enlarge printed materials up to 50 times their normal size and adjust colors and contrast.
- **Smart Canes & Wearable Devices** - Smart canes provide navigation assistance, while wearable devices like smart glasses can identify objects, read text, and recognize faces using a small camera and audio feedback.
- **Talking Devices** - Devices such as talking clocks, thermostats, and digital audio players provide information and allow interaction through synthesized speech.
- **Low Vision Lamps & Stands** - Reading lamps and stands that improve visibility for printed materials, helping individuals with low vision to read more comfortably.

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER

10/7 (Tuesday): 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.
NEW Accessibilities Round Table Meeting (CNIA - 07)
meet.google.com/zfc-atrt-evh
<https://cnia.org/events/month/2025-10/>

Current and prospective trusted servants, please bring your questions, ideas and your Accessibilities ES&H and to share at this collaborative discussion meeting.



10/11 (Saturday): 11:00 AM Pacific / 2:00 PM Eastern
Get Into Action Committee (GIA) Workshop - DDMs of the six Online Districts in the U.S. will share how participating in an Online District will connect your group to a Conference Delegate.

Meeting ID: 828 5581 8606 | Passcode: gia
ASL/ Spanish Interpretation Available

<https://www.giacommittee.org/>



10/13 (Monday): 4:00 PM Pacific / 7:00 PM Eastern
All Accessibilities Committee (AAC) Monthly Meeting
A monthly sharing/Q & A session for AA members from USA / Canada with an interest in Accessibilities in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Meeting: Second Monday at 4 PM Pacific Time
ZOOM ID: 811 7204 2624
Passcode: AAC2024
Email: aacsec2020@gmail.com
Website: <http://accessaa.org>

NOVEMBER

Friday, 11/14] , 5 PM - Sunday, 11/16, 12:00 PM
CNIA 07 - HYBRID Election Assembly
Tracy Community Center, 950 East St., Tracy, CA
Registration Flyer: <https://cnia.org/assembly-info-2/>

FOR THOSE WITH ACCESSIBILITIES REQUESTS:

Please email accessibilities@cnia.org if any of your GSRs, District or Committee Members require an access accommodation.



Friday, 11/14 - Sunday, 11/16 (Times Vary by Zone)

OIAA 2025 (Online Intergroup of A.A.)
Contact: <https://aa-intergroup.org/oiaa2025/>

This year's theme — **Unity: At Home Around the World** — celebrates the power of connection across time zones, cultures, and kitchen tables.

Three days, each spotlighting a different region of the world, all connected through recovery and shared experience.

Day 1: Asia, Oceania and the Americas – The sun rises on unity

Day 2: Americas and Asia – Midway moments of connection

Day 3: Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas – Unity as the sun sets

JANUARY 17, 2026

Special Forum for Deaf Alcoholics Anonymous Members

A Language and Cultural Special Forum for Deaf A.A. Members who use American Sign Language (ASL), Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ) & Lengua de Señas Mexicana (LSM)

This General Service Office event will be held online and facilitated by Deaf A.A. members.

- There will be Deaf/hearing panelists and Q&A/discussion
- All A.A. members are welcome to attend (**ASL, LSQ, LSM, English, Spanish and French language interpretation**)

Please note that the Q&A/discussion participation will primarily be dedicated to Deaf members as this forum is to provide a platform for the Deaf members to ask questions and to communicate with the General Service Board and the General Service Office.

District 2 District (D2D) and Group 2 Group (G2G)

This section of the newsletter is envisioned as a community space for District and Group members to share their Accessibilities successes and best practices.

As individual members, we are encouraged to get a recovery sponsor who can guide us through A.A.'s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. When we enter into General Service, we are encouraged to get a service sponsor. Why not create a forum for 'mentorship' between and among Districts and Groups who are carrying not only the vision, but the action of 'Accessibility for All' into their meetings and programs.

If you have something you'd like to share with--or something you'd like to ask of--A.A. peers engaged in Accessibilities service within Area 07, please email your questions and/or your experience, strength and hope to Accessibilities@cnia.org and we will post your comments and questions here.

Thank you for reading. Please "pass it on" by sharing this newsletter with other members of your district / group.

**In the next Issue of Access 360:
Deaf & Hard of Hearing (HOH) Members of A.A.**

You can contact us at: Accessibilities@cnia.org