



SUSSEX DISTRICT

GUIDELINES FOR GROUPS – PERSONAL CONDUCT.

VIOLENCE / HARRASMENT

In any form we see this as unacceptable, at any level of our service structure. Our members have the right to feel secure when going attending meetings and carrying out service.

References -

“each member of CA is but a small part of a whole. CA must continue to live or we must surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first, but individual welfare follows close afterwards” (tradition one long form).

“for our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving god as he may express himself in our Group Conscience” (tradition two long form)

“each CA group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose – that of carrying its message to the addict who still suffers” (tradition five long form).

Aim

We hope this guidance provides a framework for CA groups within the Sussex District seeking to tackle incidents of violence / harrassment of any form within their meetings or online. Our members may experience harrassment in various ways, for instance because of ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, gender, age stature, appearance.

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER –

As a group you may find it useful to be proactive and through a conscience meeting discuss a contingency plan should an incident of harrasment occur.

Any response to incidents must be measured and reasonable. No member should place themselves in danger , or leave their group open to legal repercussions as a consequence of their response.

In the case of persistent innapropriate / threatening / violent / predatory behaviour that prevent the group from carrying out its primary purpose (tradition 5), homegroup members may wish to refer to the following words from Bill W on the matter *“this amount of clarity does not mean that we cannot exclude those who disturb or seriously interfere with the functioning of the group. Such people can be asked to quiet down or go elsewhere or to come back when they are better able to participate”* (Letter from Bill W 1969).

BACKGROUND

As individual CA members it is beholden on us to consider two things –

- be mindful of our conduct and the potential damage to CA unity which may result from innapropriate or violent conduct
- attempt to treat any member who is displaying innapropriate or violent behaviour in the spirit of our fourth step prayer seeking to consider them as “ as a sick person” and consider how we can be of use to them whilst ensuring the safety of fellow members and smooth running of home group meetings

Each CA group offers an open invitation to any individual having a desire to stop using cocaine and all other mind altering substances. In terms of our traditions, it is the responsibility of us all to ensure that carrying the message to all who attend is done with integrity and honesty. We also accept that our

traditions (including group autonomy) do not place us above the law and that members who behave in a criminal manner are legally accountable. Our first tradition reminds us that we all have a role in respect to the common welfare and protection of individual members.

Every CA group ought to recognise and accept responsibility for addressing inappropriate personal conduct and thereby protect the good name of Cocaine Anonymous as a respected Fellowship.

We do of course accept that each CA group is largely self regulating within the framework of our steps / traditions / concepts and legacies and would suggest that the group conscience be utilised as an effective forum for discussing the spiritual health of individual groups.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

We urge all our members to raise any behaviour they experience as harrasing or innapropriate with the GSR or Secretary of the group involved. All our members have the right to feel reasonably safe at CA meetings. The following are *guidelines only* which groups, individuals and members acting as trusted servants on our behalf may wish to consider.

- **Personal action** – often it is sufficient for the recipient to simply point out to the person creating the problem that their behaviour / conduct is offensive. We all have the right to challenge the unacceptable behaviour of another CA member. *We strongly suggest that before such action is taken the recipient prepares for the conversation by discussing the incident with their sponsor.*
- **Group action** – should the above method of resolution fail then we suggest the recipient approach the group secretary or GSR for help and advice in feeling safe. A member of the group service committee should approach the member displaying the behaviour at the earliest opportunity to offer them the opportunity to discuss and resolve the matter. If the situation is sufficiently complex or serious / the group feels unsure as to how to respond, then we suggest the group discusses gaining support from the district service committee, unity committee or delegate. We respectfully request that in addressing any individual and their behaviour each group pauses to consider our ultimate authority (a

loving god) and ensures that any decisions are made via the process of our Group Conscience. Please be mindful of this in considering issues such as whether CA group members should continue in their positions as trusted servants.

AT OUR GROUP MEETINGS

- We strongly encourage all to find a home group! This can be a very effective way of strengthening the bonds of fellowship and assist in feeling able to address any inappropriate conduct.
- Regular group conscience meetings – we all know how important business meetings are but a regular group conscience meetings (perhaps once every 3 months) can help assist with the spiritual health of our meetings).
- Should unacceptable behaviour occur then members who have done the 12 steps and perhaps hold service positions at the group have a responsibility to ask for the behaviour to stop.
- We suggest that a reading / top table card be utilised (we now have this available for each CA meeting in Sussex District) to outline either at the beginning or end of the meeting what we aim to provide in each of our meetings regards personal safety.
- We should not condone offensive behaviour by failing to challenge it. This implies that the person acting inappropriately has our permission to act in this way and therefore encourages others to do the same.

AT A PERSONAL LEVEL

- Treat others with the respect and dignity you would wish for yourself
- Remember that newcomers to our fellowship are often severely damaged by their experience of active addiction
- Don't travel alone with newcomers of the opposite sex
- As a newcomer, don't travel alone with an existing member of the opposite sex
- Don't do twelfth step visits to a home on your own
- Men with men, women with women sponsorship is strongly recommended
- Don't respond to offensive behaviour with offensive behaviour

- Should someone speak to you regards your behaviour and the effect it is having, try to listen with an open mind and pause for thought. You might even wish to thank them for pointing it out at a later date!

We hope that this provides some guidance whilst respecting the right of each group to practice autonomy ***except in matters effecting CA as a whole.***

Remember ***personal conduct matters!***