

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) FOR AREA 5 GROUP RECORDS

(This FAQ is maintained at http://al-anon-co.org/images/FAQ-group_records.pdf.)

Click on your question to see the answer:

- Q – Why this emphasis on record keeping?**
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- Q – I’m reluctant to provide personal information. Do you really need it?**
- Q – What about Alateen groups?**
- Q – I’d really rather communicate directly with my District / Service Center / WSO. Do I need to go through the Area?**
- Q – All those places have records of their own; how do we know everyone has the same information?**
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- Q – I’ve heard that WSO wants groups to have only one meeting. Our group has multiple meetings (or we want to start a new group with more than one meeting). What do we do?**
- Q – I’m confused about a term used on the registration/change form; can you explain some of the more common ones?**
- Q – Can I get a report of my group’s / district’s / service center’s information?**

Contact Information:

- Q – I’ve read through this FAQ and I still have a question; how do I contact a person?**
- Q – Where do I send hardcopy mail?**

Q – Why this emphasis on record keeping?

A – First and foremost, when people are in need of a meeting we want to be sure we don't send them to a meeting that doesn't exist or that meets at a different place or time. We also want to make sure they know about meetings that do exist. So it's especially important we have accurate information about your meeting(s).

Second, we need to be able to communicate with our groups: for each group, we need your "Current Mailing Address" so the Area and WSO can send mail like Forums, Butterflies, minutes, etc.; we need to know how to contact your Group Representative; and we would like to have "Contacts" (first names and phone numbers) so we can refer someone who wants detailed information about a meeting. [Return to Questions](#)

Q – Who needs to know all this stuff?

A – Your District Representative, your local Service Center (if any), the Area (that's us), and the World Service Office (WSO). [Return to Questions](#)

Q – That's a lot of places! Why so many?

A – All of the above points of contact need to know about your meetings and how to contact you. But, as you'll see in the next question, if you send your updates to the Area, we'll forward them for you! [Return to Questions](#)

Q – OK, so what's the best way to tell everyone about our group's changes?

A – Though you can communicate with all the above points of contact separately, the Area can be a single point of contact, if you will use one of two simple methods. 1) If you have internet access, the simplest – and best – way is to use our interactive form: http://al-anon-co.org/members/Group_Records.php. 2) You can also fill out a hardcopy of the Group Registration/Change Form, available from your District or Service Center (you can also print it from <http://al-anon.org/members/pdf/GRI.pdf>), and mail it to Area 5 Records, PO Box 38924, Colorado Springs, CO 80937. Even better, if you have a scanner, you can scan the form in and email the image to records @ al-anon-co.org¹ (100 DPI is recommended).

If you use one of these two methods, we will forward the information to all the other places for you. [Return to Questions](#)

Q – But I just have a minor change. Do I really need to go to all that trouble?

A – You can email changes in any form to records @ al-anon-co.org¹, you can phone changes in, and you can even hand changes to us scribbled on a napkin. We'll do the best we can. (Make sure we know how to contact you!) But if you would like us to forward your changes, please use one of the above methods so that everyone gets the information in a format they're able to process easily. [Return to Questions](#)

¹ To use this email address, remove the blanks. You can also use the contact form at http://al-anon-co.org/members/Contact_Member.php (but this method doesn't allow an attachment).

Q – What if I don't have all the information for my group that is requested on the form?

A – Don't worry; just fill in what you can. Area Records and WSO can usually decipher your information and put the updates in correctly; and if we have your correct contact information, we can also contact you for more information. [Return to Questions](#)

Q – I'm reluctant to provide personal information. Do you really need it?

A – We all have legitimate concerns about providing personal information. Please know that the Area uses personal information for appropriate Al-Anon purposes only. Addresses, phone numbers and email addresses allow us to communicate with you. Some people are especially reluctant to provide email addresses, but they really help us with rapid and accurate communication, and they can save the Area a lot of money when it comes to sending your group such information as Assembly minutes. We don't publish such information on the web or any other form available to the general public². [Return to Questions](#)

Q – What about Alateen groups?

A – All Alateen registrations and changes must be communicated through the Area Safety Administrator. Please refer to http://al-anon-co.org/members/Members_Alateen_Home.php for details. [Return to Questions](#)

Q – I'd really rather communicate directly with my District / Service Center / WSO. Do I need to go through the Area?

A – Definitely not! If you'd prefer to communicate directly, please do. But bear in mind that the Area has need of the same information in most cases, so please let us know as well. WSO will forward changes to the Area, but it may take a while, so consider the criticality of the update. If you have meeting location or time changes, for example, it's especially important to let the Area know right away so we don't send people to meetings that don't exist. [Return to Questions](#)

Q – All those places have records of their own; how do we know everyone has the same information?

A – One of the main reasons the Area provides a single point of contact is that when groups contact a variety of places, the likelihood of differing information is high. When you submit your changes to the Area, and we promptly forward them to the other points of contact, everyone has access to the same inputs. The Area is also pursuing a so-called "one database" project: we're working with the Districts, the Service Centers and WSO to improve coordination among our records. [Return to Questions](#)

Q – I have suggestions on how to make the process easier and less confusing. Are you listening?

A – For sure! We'd love to hear suggestions. Email them to records @ al-anon-co.org³, or phone them in to the Records Coordinator at the number listed in your latest Butterfly. Or...hand them to us on a napkin at the next Assembly! [Return to Questions](#)

² Website guidelines do allow rare exceptions if explicit permission is granted by the individual.

³ To use this email address, remove the blanks. You can also use the contact form at http://al-anon-co.org/members/Contact_Member.php (but this method doesn't allow an attachment).

Q – How do I find out a meeting in my vicinity?

A – Great question! The Area publishes a meeting schedule for all of Colorado, and you can find it here: http://al-anon-co.org/Meeting_Home.php. You will find lists sorted in various ways, and also a cool search capability so you can focus in on exactly what you want. But please note: the schedule can only be as up-to-date and accurate as the groups make it, by sending in their updates. [Return to Questions](#)

Q – How often is the Area website schedule updated?

A – The schedule is updated soon after the Records Coordinator receives a change that affects the schedule (new meeting, changed time or location, etc.); updates are usually posted within a day or two of receipt. [Return to Questions](#)

Q – Why does our group receive multiple requests for records verification?

A – Experience has shown that despite everyone's best intentions, information can become inaccurate over time. So both WSO and the Area send out requests to the Districts and Groups to help us find and correct problems.

WSO sends a request for verification to each group on an annual basis. If you have changes, they ask you to mark up their form and return it to them. WSO relays these changes to the Area after they've processed them. Groups can also submit these updates directly to the Area, however, and they will be forwarded to WSO for them. Either way, both the Area and WSO receive such updates.

The Area sends out requests to Districts twice a year (usually before the winter and spring Assemblies) asking for markups of group information. Your District Representative may ask the groups to participate in these markups. (Behind the scenes, WSO also asks the Area to compare our records with theirs twice a year. To support this comparison, please help us keep the Area records up to date.) [Return to Questions](#)

Q – I've heard that WSO wants groups to have only one meeting. Our group has multiple meetings (or we want to start a new group with more than one meeting). What do we do?

A – This is a group conscience decision.

Advantages of registering each meeting as a separate group are 1) each meeting can have its own Group Representative to represent it at District meetings and Assemblies, giving each meeting more direct involvement in the Al-Anon fellowship as a whole, and reducing the risk of dominance of the meetings by a few members; 2) workloads for service positions, such as GRs and Treasurers, are lessened when each meeting has its own positions; 3) each meeting gets its own mailings (Forums, Service Manuals, Butterflies, Group Notebooks, etc.).

On the other side of the coin, advantages of a group conducting multiple meetings are 1) it preserves a group's identity as a single group, if that's how its members want to view it; 2) one registration is sufficient, and only one group name is needed; 3) the group doesn't have to identify separate service positions – GRs, Current Mailing Addresses, etc. – for each meeting; 4) when updates occur - e.g., meeting location - the group doesn't have to submit multiple records updates; 5) a single set of mailings would be sent to the group, saving paper and possible effort/confusion.

If your existing group decides to split one of its meetings into a separate group, please submit two changes – one to remove the meeting from the existing group, and one to register the new meeting as a new group (with a different name). [Return to Questions](#)

Q – Can I get a report of my group’s / district’s / service center’s information?

A – Area Records can quickly develop various reports for groups, districts and service centers. To protect personal information, we will need to have you on record as an appropriate group / district / service center representative. Let us know what you need!

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Q – I’m confused about a term used on the registration/change form; can you explain some of the more common ones?

A – Here are some of the terms that have caused confusion in the past:

- **Special Focus meetings:** From Guideline G-12, Starting an Al-Anon Group (<http://al-anon.org/members/pdf/guidelines/G12.pdf>): “*Special focus groups seek to attract a special category of members providing the group remains open and does not exclude any Al-Anon member who needs a meeting.*” Examples are Men’s, Women’s, Adult Children, Step Study, Literature Study, etc. Note that WSO’s GR-1 form uses the term “Group Focus”.
- **Open/Closed meetings:** From page 80 of the 2006-2009 Service Manual: “*Closed meetings are for all Al-Anon members, anyone whose personal life is or has been deeply affected by close contact with a problem drinker. Open meetings may be attended by anyone interested in Al-Anon/Alateen.*” From page 37 of the Service Manual: “*Generally, Al-Anon group meetings are “closed,” limited to members and prospective members, giving them the freedom to share and listen to the experience, strength, and hope of one another on a confidential and anonymous basis.*”
- **Beginners meetings:** Beginners meetings are intended to introduce newcomers to Al-Anon. WSO has provided Guideline G-2, which suggests a sequence of meetings for this purpose (<http://al-anon.org/members/pdf/guidelines/G02.pdf>). Some groups conduct Beginners meetings immediately before a regular meeting. [Return to Questions](#)

Q – I’ve read through this FAQ and I still have a question; how do I contact a person?

A – To send an inquiry to the Records Coordinator, use the contact form at http://al-anon-co.org/members/Contact_Member.php.

If you have an attachment to send, you can email records @ al-anon-co.org⁴.

You can also refer to the Butterfly for a phone number.

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Q – Where do I send hardcopy mail?

A – Send mail to Area 5 Records, PO Box 38924, Colorado Springs, CO 80937. (If you lose track of this address, just refer to your latest Butterfly.) [Return to Questions](#)

⁴ To use this email address, remove the blanks.