

# Service Workbook

# Bridging the Gap



Alcoholics Anonymous Temporary Contact Program

— Notes —

# Introduction —

The Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous offers a program designed to assist new members after their release from treatment and correctional facilities. This service is commonly referred to as the "Bridging the Gap" or "Temporary Contact" program. Area 59 is comprised of forty-eight geographical districts which coordinate Bridging the Gap collectively. These districts respond to the needs of the members in facilities within their vicinity and cooperate with each other to accommodate requests from outside of their boundaries.

Simply put, a temporary contact is an A.A. member who works with clients/inmates after they are discharged from treatment or correctional facilities. The temporary contact helps the new member "Bridge the Gap" between the facility and Alcoholics Anonymous in their community. This arrangement is meant to be temporary only. The volunteer has agreed to accompany the new member to as many as six meetings after their release in order to acquaint them with A.A. members and meetings in the area where they live.

Experience has shown that attending an A.A. meeting as soon as possible after release is vital to making a sober transition to life on the outside. During this time the new member will learn more about sponsors, home groups, working A.A.'s twelve steps and doing service work. The temporary contact volunteer is available to answer questions and explain the A.A. program of recovery. They do not provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or other such services.

The new member will most likely hear five basic suggestions for sobriety that the Fellowship shares with all its members:

- 1 Don't drink
- 2 Go to meetings
- 3 Work the steps
- 4 Call your sponsor
- 5 Read the "Big Book,"
  Alcoholics Anonymous



# Bridging the Gap

## **Basic Program Procedures**

- 1. A confined member is eligible for this program when they are within three months of being released.
- 2. They fill out a form giving their name, age, gender, and release date along with a phone number and address where released if possible; a general location if not.

#### **Temporary Contact Request Form**

- 3. The *Bridging the Gap* coordinator will match them with a suitable temporary contact, taking into consideration age, sex, and destination.
- 4. After selection, the temporary contact will confirm the request with the new member.
- 5. The new member and the temporary contact will then make arrangements to meet after the release date and attend their first A.A. meeting together.

**Note:** If you are viewing a PDF (rather than printed), version of this workbook, many links are included to provide additional information and support.

— Notes —

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# — Overview of Bridging the Gap —

#### **Responsibilities of Area 59**

- 1. **Database** Area 59 will maintain a unified list of Temporary Contacts and *Bridging the Gap* volunteers, using the information supplied by the districts. The *Bridging the Gap* Coordinator is responsible for maintaining and updating the list.
- 2. **Program** A uniform *Bridging the Gap* program and supporting documents will be available from Area 59. Information sharing and BTG documents will be provided by the joint efforts of the treatment and corrections standing chairs and their committees. The area standing chairs will offer support in helping the districts set up and maintain a *Bridging the Gap* program.
- 3. Workshop It is recommended an annual Area 59 BTG workshop be held on the second Saturday of May. This workshop will be the joint responsibility of the *Bridging the Gap* Steering Committee.

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Area 59 - Eastern Pennsylvania General Service Assembly (EPGSA) is comprised of a total of 49 districts; 48 geographic districts and one Spanish linguistic district encompassing all of eastern Pennsylvania. Area 59 serves approximately 1,636 active, registered A.A. groups and more than 32,044 members throughout eastern Pennsylvania.

#### **Responsibilities of the Districts**

1. **Volunteers** – The districts are encouraged to find, organize, and prepare enough *Bridging the Gap* volunteers to meet current needs. Volunteers may be signed up at A.A. meetings and other appropriate A.A. events. It is desirable that they are given BTG information and briefed on the temporary contact program. GSRs and district officers may distribute and collect the volunteer sign-up sheets and cards.

#### **Volunteer Sign-up Form**

The *Bridging the Gap* Coordinator for Area 59 will update each District Volunteer database quarterly. District personnel will provide information needing to be deleted from the database. The updated database will be delivered to the DCM or District BTG coordinator for local use.

- 2. **Presentation** District committees are asked to contact treatment and corrections facilities within their district and present the *Bridging the Gap* program to the staff. After gaining permission the program is offered to potential new members. If the district does not have a separate BTG committee, the corrections and treatment volunteers are usually in the best position to present *Bridging the Gap* to inmates and clients. Note: these efforts should be coordinated with local Intergroup standing committees.
- 3. Volunteer database and Temporary Contact
  Requests Each district is requested to organize
  and maintain volunteer contact information. The
  districts are responsible to develop methods for
  receiving the Temporary Contact requests from
  new members and matching them with temporary
  contacts within the district.

The purpose of *Bridging the Gap* in Eastern Pennsylvania, Area 59 is to assist the new member who is confined and preparing for release from a treatment or correctional facility. It is designed to help them make the transition to the A.A. Fellowship In the community where they will be living. The activities of this program are based on the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Bridging the Gap should be thought of as basic twelfth step work. The idea is to accompany a new member to several of their first outside meetings and introduce them to different types of meeting formats and A.A. members in their local community. Once a patient or an inmate has expressed an interest in A.A. and would like to attend meetings after being released, the Bridging the Gap program offers a solution to support this important adjustment. New members who attend an A.A. meeting within the first two days after returning home have been shown to have a much better chance of staying sober.

#### **Content**

- I. Basics of the *Bridging the Gap* Program,Eastern Pennsylvania Area 59
- II. Duties and Responsibilities of the Eastern Pennsylvania, Area 59 Committee
  - A. Volunteer Database
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  - C. Bridging the Gap Workshop
- III. Duties and Responsibilities of the Districts
- IV. District Bridging the Gap Program Procedures
  - A. Preparing Bridging the Gap Volunteers
  - B. Presentation to Facilities and New Members
  - C. Volunteer Database and Temporary

    Contact Requests



# I. Basics of the *Bridging the Gap*Program, Eastern Pennsylvania, Area 59

- A. New members from treatment and correctional facilities are introduced to *Bridging the Gap* (BTG) by district BTG committees or by the treatment and corrections volunteers already in place.
- B. The inmate or client completes a request form including their name, age, gender, current contact information, release date, and contact information after release.
- C. This information is returned to the district Bridging the Gap coordinator or to the appropriate committee chairperson from corrections or treatment to be processed.
- D. If the request is local, it is matched with a temporary contact. If it is outside of the district, the information is forwarded to the Area 59 *Bridging the Gap* Coordinator via the Temporary Contact Request Form below.

#### **Temporary Contact Request Form**

E. The Temporary Contact volunteer makes arrangements to accompany the new A.A. member to an A.A. meeting within 24 to 48 hours after release. Like a twelve step call, it is suggested to bring an A.A. friend along. Try to attend up to six meetings together. (Big Book, Speaker, Discussion, Step meetings, etc.)

# II. Duties and Responsibilities of the Eastern Pennsylvania Area 59 Committee

#### A. Volunteer Database

Area 59 will maintain a unified database of Temporary Contacts (TC) and BTG volunteers contributed by the districts. BEST method is to enter volunteer data directly to the area website volunteer form link. The Area 59 *Bridging the Gap* Coordinator will maintain and distribute an updated list of TC Volunteers within each District on a quarterly basis. The Area encourages all Districts to load volunteers to the database so the Area BTG Coordinator has access to the volunteers in every District. Each District will be responsible for updating the volunteer database. Simply submit changes to the Area BTG Coordinator for updating.

#### B. Area 59 Bridging the Gap Program

Area 59 will provide a uniform Bridging the Gap program the districts may follow, using supporting materials for duplication. These materials can be modified to address the specific needs of each district. The Area will continue to gather information helpful in revising and improving this program.

The Area BTG Coordinator Treatment and Corrections standing chairs make up the steering committee for the *Bridging the Gap* program. They will collaborate to inform and to share the combined Area 59 *Bridging the Gap* experience with all districts. They will maintain the *Bridging the Gap* documents and procedures and review them on an annual basis. These documents will be updated and revised as necessary through the joint cooperation of the Area BTG Steering committee.

Bridging the Gap District Kits and supporting documents will be available on the area59aa.org web site to be downloaded and duplicated. These documents are meant to be used by each district relevant to their needs and may be changed to include local district names, addresses, and telephone numbers as determined by each district committee.

#### C. Bridging the Gap Workshop

A *Bridging the Gap* workshop will be held each year on the second Saturday in May. This workshop will be rotated among districts. The selection to host the event will be made one year in advance. The purpose of the workshop is to provide a joint forum for the BTG Steering Committee to share experiences and discuss ways to better serve Area 59 and its members.

# III. Duties and Responsibilities of the Districts

In Eastern Pennsylvania Area 59 each district manages its own *Bridging the Gap* program. The districts find volunteers, present the program at facilities, and maintain a database to match new member requests with temporary contact volunteers. Note: these efforts should be coordinated with local Intergroup standing committees.

The information contained in the Area 59 District *Bridging the Gap* workbook is a collection of suggestions based on the experience shared within the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. The letters, pamphlets, and other documents in this kit are meant to be used in a manner that best fit the needs of each individual district. They can be used in any combination and adapted to contain appropriate mailing addresses, etc. relevant to the district.

Managing the activities of the *Bridging the Gap*Program is the basic responsibility of the district BTG coordinator. In the absence of a BTG coordinator, the corrections and treatment committee chairpersons along with the help of the DCM assume, delegate or appoint these responsibilities. The *Bridging the Gap* structure can be organized in a variety of different ways. The following are four possibilities:

- 1. A *Bridging the Gap* Coordinator with a BTG committee.
- 2. A BTG Coordinator utilizing the corrections and treatment committees.
- 3. Corrections and Treatment Chairpersons using their committees.
- 4. The DCM in cooperation with their District's GSRs.
- 5. The Home Groups in cooperation with the local Intergroup.

# IV. District *Bridging the Gap* **Program Procedures**

Bridging the Gap has three components; preparation, invitation, and coordination. The following sections discuss each of these key areas. The responsibilities for these activities may be approached in a variety of ways. Each district determines what works best considering the existing circumstances.

## A. Preparing Bridging the Gap Volunteers

1. Area 59 has prepared a volunteer sign-up sheet the districts may use. It lists the common information needed to match the temporary contact with those requesting a Temporary Contact. These sheets can be circulated at A.A. gatherings such as regular group meetings, assemblies, and workshops. This information is to be considered confidential and for

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use by Bridging the Gap only. Some members are sensitive to their contact information and may wish to apply by using the "Bridging the Gap Volunteer" card or mailing the application directly to the coordinator instead of using the group sheet. Today it is recommended that completing the Volunteer registration form on our website is the best way to sign up.

#### **Volunteer Sign-up Form**

- 2. Once a volunteer has submitted the temporary contact application, it is a good idea to call and verify their intentions and contact information. The Area 59 pamphlet "Temporary Contact Volunteer" along with the "Suggestions for BTG Volunteers" page will help them understand what they are being asked to do. The suggested "Volunteer" packet will prepare them in greater detail for becoming a temporary contact, Refer to "Suggested Literature Packets" on pages 12–13.
- 3. It is suggested that the BTG volunteer has at least one year of current and continuous sobriety and that they are comfortable within the fellowship. It is also strongly suggested that two members accompany the newly released contact to their first outside meeting. It is sometimes helpful for the volunteers to have a "New Member" packet available to offer during the first outside meeting. Refer to "Suggested Literature Packets."
- 4. Many of our members who have experienced making twelfth step calls can readily adapt to Bridging the Gap. They may only need to be briefed on the details about the individual and/or institution policies before being called on to be a Temporary Contact for a new member.

#### B. Presentation to Facilities and New Members

#### **Facility Administrators**

- 1. Meet with appropriate staff members and explain what *Bridging the Gap* is and how it works. The area has prepared an introduction folder for facility administrators which may be used by volunteers when making this presentation. Usually this discussion is made by the BTG coordinator and at least one other committee member. Ask for permission to explain the program to the inmates or clients and distribute the pamphlets and supporting documents.
- 2. Ask about rules the institution may have in regard to contact with outside members. For example, some facilities will not allow the same person bringing meetings into the facilities to be a temporary contact to a newly released member.

#### **New Members**

- Bridging the Gap may be introduced in many different ways. One method is to hold a special meeting entirely devoted to *Bridging the Gap*.
   Another approach is to have the members who take A.A. meetings into the facility explain the program periodically. New members will find the Area 59 pamphlet called the "New Member Guide" helpful in understanding what to expect from the program.
- 2. Emphasize the need for complete and accurate contact information. Stress the importance of timely submission of their request and any correspondence with the temporary contact in order to assure processing before their release date. Using the sign-up card or tear-off page of the pamphlet allows them to register more easily and saves the time and expense of postage.

**Temporary Contact Request Form** 

- 3. Inform the new members about how to reach Alcoholics Anonymous in case they are released before the temporary contact has been made or in the event, they make their decision to participate after they have returned home. Outside meeting schedules are very helpful.
- B. Volunteer Database and Temporary Contact Requests

#### **Database**

1. Each District maintains its own database or list of Temporary Contacts and BTG volunteers. Area 59 BTG Coordinator will manage a master database for the entire Area. The Area 59 BTG Coordinator has developed a volunteer sign-up sheet outlining the basic information required to organize a database. Please utilize this recommended data collection system for your local efforts.

#### **Volunteer Sign-up Form**

- 2. It is suggested that the database be refreshed periodically to ensure the temporary contacts are still available and willing to participate. Direct phone calls made to the volunteers are generally more successful than mailings. Text messages seem very productive method to date.
- 3. Once a comfortable number of volunteers is reached, it might be well to suspend recruiting activities until demand overtakes volunteers again. There can be a negative effect if the volunteers lack an opportunity to participate.
- 4. It is important that districts provide periodic updates to the Area as their volunteer information changes.
- 5. New Member is the new A.A. getting out of a facility. An A.A. Volunteer is a sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous willing to serve as a Temporary Contact.

#### **Temporary Contact Requests**

- It is recommended for the district to establish a
   P.O. Box as a neutral location to send and receive
   correspondence for temporary contact requests.
   A disposable cell phone or Google Voice, which is
   FREE may also be useful as a means of confidential
   communication.
- 2. A timely response to requests is essential to preserve the hope and confidence of the new member. If a volunteer is available, it is good to have them make the initial contact and begin the Temporary Contact process. If no one is readily available, the coordinator should let the new member know a temporary contact will be located as soon as possible.
- 3. In the event that the Request for a Temporary Contact is outside your District you will complete the Website Temporary Contact Request form link and the Area BTG committee will be responsible for finding the A.A. Volunteer to call and help the new A.A. member.
- 4. It would be helpful to the area for the districts to share the experiences of those who have been involved in *Bridging the Gap* in order to make future improvements to the program.



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Bridging the Gap, like Alcoholics Anonymous, is based on attraction. The most important part of the program is to offer the new member a Fellowship they will want to become a part of.

## BTG = 1, 2, 3

- **1.** Preparation = Volunteers
- 2. Invitation = New Members
- 3. Coordination = Success
- Members willing to become temporary contacts need to be organized and permission obtained from institutions prior to making the BTG program available.
- 2. Volunteers offer the A.A. program inside facilities; prospective members are given information about Bridging the Gap and invited to participate.
- 2. Local members acting as a BTG coordinator provide points of contact in chosen locations which forms the Area 59 temporary contact network.



#### 1. Preparation = Volunteers

# Suggested BTG Group Presentation – Building a Volunteer Database

It is suggested that the DCM and members of the district Bridging the Gap committee read and review materials that can be used in presenting the program to your members. After a review of the program and all materials available you should design a District and Homegroup presentation that presenters are comfortable with. The goal of this presentation is to inform membership of the Bridging the Gap program and build a volunteer database. The Area 59 Bridging the Gap Coordinator along with the Chairs of the Corrections and Treatment committees are willing and able to assist in organizing and presenting this information to your district or homegroups.

Following is a list of suggested materials to be used in the presentation. Materials can also be used in Homegroups as literature available for sharing.

# Click on title below to access documents from Area 59 – *Bridging the Gap*

Bridging the Gap Basics

Letter to the Group Representative

Introduction

Overview

Guidelines

Sign-up sheets

Volunteer Cards

Area 59 Volunteer Form

Do's and Don'ts

Twelve and Twelve

# Click on title below to access pamphlets from Area 59 Bridging the Gap

**Temporary Contact Volunteer** .PDF **New Member Guide** (Treatment) .PDF **New Member Guide** (Corrections) .PDF

# Click on title below to access PDFs from G.S.O.

Bridging the Gap (P-49)
Corrections Correspondence (F-26)
Bridging the Gap – Contact Outside (F-184)
Corrections Pre-Release Outside (F-162)

**Note:** These kits may include all or just some of the materials listed above. The essential items for the GSR or DCM Rep. Kit would consist of the letter to the GSR or DCM Rep., The introduction page, the overview page, the Temporary Contact Volunteer pamphlet, and the sign-up cards or sheets – BEST is the Volunteer Sign-up Form below.

#### **Volunteer Sign-up Form**

The Corrections Correspondence program is not a part of BTG. It is sometimes associated with BTG because some new members are anxious to connect with the Fellowship long before they are eligible for release. It is a great opportunity for both the inside and outside member.

**Note:** The G.S.O. literature listed on pages 13–15 are the Registered and Copyrighted property of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. Printing a single copy of these items are permitted, in accordance with A.A. World Services, Inc.

#### 2. Invitation = New Members

#### **BTG Volunteer Presentation to Administrators**

When visiting with program administrators at treatment and correctional facilities, the most important thing to remember is we are representing the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. Be sure to dress appropriately, be on time and be pleasant. Be brief and to the point but give as much information as necessary to help them understand the service we are providing. The staff may already be familiar with Alcoholics Anonymous. We are simply there to inform them about *Bridging the Gap*, our program to assist the new A.A. member connect to Alcoholics Anonymous on the outside after they leave the facility.

The presentation team should consist of at least two A.A. members, those familiar with how the program is carried out within the district represented. It might be helpful to emphasize from the beginning that the terms "Bridging the Gap" and "Temporary Contact" are sometimes used interchangeably when referring to this program.

# Suggestions for making a *Bridging the Gap*Presentation

- 1. Introduce yourself and tell them you are there to explain the Alcoholics Anonymous program called *Bridging the Gap*. Hand out the Facility Administrator Kit folders. A list of materials for these folders is found on the next page.
- 2. If time permits, show them the video "Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous" from GSO, or the Area 59 Corrections Media Presentation. Explain that you would like to come into their facility to show this presentation to clients or inmates who are interested in A.A. and explain how "Bridging the Gap" can assist them in making the transition to Alcoholics Anonymous on the outside.

- 3. If presentation teams and videos are not used to introduce *Bridging the Gap* to new members in that facility or in your district, explain to them that the volunteers who lead the A.A. meetings would like to offer the *Bridging the Gap* program during regularly scheduled meetings held there.
- 4. Review with them the *Bridging the Gap* pamphlets and other materials you would like to use when informing new members about the program and collecting contact information. While discussing the temporary contact request cards or other BTG forms, indicate that the information is needed in order to make arrangements for the new member to attend an A.A. meeting on the outside after the individual is released.
- 5. Review our Traditions with particular emphasis on the **third** and **fifth** traditions. Our Traditions are based on our past experience. When the staff is informed ahead of time about what A.A. does and doesn't do, later misunderstandings can be avoided. For example, the non-alcoholic can be referred to other twelve step programs. If an individual is unsure about being alcoholic, explain that we are happy to be inclusive and will accept anyone until they are able to decide for themselves. Point out the "A.A. Fact Sheet," "Information on A.A.," the "Do's and Don'ts" list and pamphlet the "New Member Guide". These materials emphasize what to expect and what not to expect from A.A. and the volunteers. It is helpful to be familiar with these items before the presentation.
- 6. After reviewing the BTG program and the handout materials, open the meeting for discussion. Encourage questions but don't make up answers. If you're not sure about something admit it and tell them you will find out and get back to them as soon as possible. There is a wealth of experience and guidance to draw from within the Fellowship. BTG has a variety of techniques to accomplish its necessary components.

- 7. Each facility has its own policies. Be sure to take notes about any procedural requirements the staff may discuss with you. We are there to be of service to them and their clients or inmates and we must follow their guidelines. Always request and receive permission before bringing any printed materials into their facility.
- 8. Leave your name, phone number and the best time for you to receive calls so they have a way of contacting you. Making ourselves available is what the *Bridging the Gap* program is all about. It is important that A.A. volunteers be considered as reliable.

Note: The Volunteer's Presentation Kit consists of these two pages and the contents of the Facilities Administrator Kit.

# **Suggested Documents for the Facility Administrator Kit**

# Click on title below to access files from Area 59 and G.S.O.

Introduction to Bridging the Gap
A.A. Fact Sheet\* (F-94)
Do's and Don'ts
Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
Area 59 District Map (optional)

#### Pamphlets and materials from Area 59

New Member Guide (Treatment) .PDF
New Member Guide (Corrections) .PDF
Temporary Contact Request Cards .DOC .PDF
Letter(s) to the Inmate .DOC .PDF
Letter(s) to the Client .DOC .PDF
Local A.A. Meeting Lists (optional)
Intergroup and Central Office contact
information (optional)

# Click on title below to access pamphlets and materials from G.S.O.

Information on A.A. (F-2)
Bridging the Gap (optional) (P-49)
Bridging the Gap – Contact Inside (F-183)
Corrections Pre-Release – Contact Inside (F-163)
A.A. at a Glance (F-1)

Where Do I Go From Here? (F-4)

**Problems Other Than Alcohol** (P-35)

**Corrections Correspondence** (F-26)

A Newcomer Asks (P-24)

**Questions and Answers on Sponsorship** (P-15)

The items on this list represent a comprehensive look at BTG in Area 59 for the prospective member. It is best to provide samples of all pamphlets and handouts intended for use by the inmates or clients in your District *Bridging the Gap* program. Printed materials usually need to be approved before they can be taken into any facility.

#### 3. Coordination = Success

# BTG Volunteer Connection with Temporary Contact Request

When visiting with potential new A.A. members in Treatment or Correctional facilities you will have the opportunity to collect Requests for Temporary Contact forms. The forms that will be collect need to be processed as soon as possible. The Request for Temporary Contacts within your immediate District will be managed and assigned a volunteer by your local *Bridging the Gap* coordinator or committee. It is suggested that you use a Request Ledger to keep track of these requests. For all the Temporary Contact

Requests for members that will be living outside of your local district, the information is forwarded to the Area 59 *Bridging the Gap* Coordinator via the Temporary Contact Request Form below.

#### **Temporary Contact Request Form**

Once you have completed and submitted the form, the Area 59 BTG coordinator and committee will own the request.

All Temporary Contact Requests MUST be passed directly to the volunteer who will then contact the new A.A. member upon their release from the institution. All volunteers should be studied in the responsibilities of the Temporary Contact duties. If they have questions when you call, please do your best to help them. If they have contact information in our database and are no longer interested in helping, please do not try to convince them otherwise. Find a WILLING and ABLE volunteer. One that is responsible.

Further work here should involve updating the local database list on a quarterly or at least annual basis. Deletions from the Area 59 database can only be made by the Area 59 BTG Coordinator. If you have changes to your local district database, please forward to btg@area59aa.org. You may request a copy of your local database as often as you need to.

# Click on title below to access materials from Area 59 and G.S.O.

Request Ledger .DOC .PDF

New Member Guide (Treatment) .PDF

New Member Guide (Corrections) .PDF

White Cards .DOC .PDF

**Bridging the Gap – Contact Inside\*** (F-183)

**Corrections Contact Inside\*** (F-163)



## For more information, please email:

btg@area59aa.org corrections@area59aa.org tf@area59aa.org

