

## Suggested Guidelines for Hybrid AA meeting

As we move towards re-opening in-person A.A. meetings after the COVID-19 shut down, many people are not ready to return to face to face, for many reasons. Some groups are using a hybrid format in which some of the attendees are in-person and other attendees join using video conferencing such (a virtual meeting). The concept poses many challenges and obstacles. The purpose of this document is to provide information for groups to consider. It can be used in conjunction with the [HMB Reopening Service Piece](#), which includes suggestions to be considered before face to face meetings are resumed.

Of course, each group is autonomous and will find its own way, but these are some general suggestions which may help your Group increase availability of meetings to all of your members.

*Due to the dynamics of the current situation, it is extremely important to have a group conscience meeting to plan & decide how to create a hybrid meeting in a safe and spiritual way.*

### Considerations

- Consider the anonymity of those attending the in-person meeting.
- What will your hybrid meeting look like? What is the hybrid format?
  - One successful example of a hybrid meeting with about 50 (25 face to face/25 online) people in attendance is to have a table at the front of the room, and using a large tablet, or laptop, with bluetooth speakers, have each person who shares come up to the table. For safety concerns during the Covid 19 Pandemic, it has been suggested that each person bring up their own chair to sit in when they share. When folks online share the tablet/laptop can be turned around for all to see them, or a large screen “smart TV” with an HDMI connection can allow the group to view the online participants.
  - The group will need to discuss and decide which safety features of their video meeting software they will use.
    - As an example, your virtual meeting app may offer the following features which might be helpful to a hybrid AA meeting. Some of these features may or may not be reasonable for A.A. meetings. Each group is autonomous and should review the options which best suit their understanding of adherence to the 12 Traditions. Features such as “Only allow individuals with a given email domain to join” may be too restrictive for inclusivity, and may be a violation of the **5th tradition**.
      - Create Waiting Rooms for attendees
      - Require host to be present before meeting starts
      - Expel a participant or all participants
      - Lock a meeting
      - Disable recording
      - Password protect a meeting
    - The group will need to decide which (non-security) features they are going to enable or disable. For instance, will the chat feature be enabled?
- If the group conscience is to hold a hybrid meeting the information should be added to the opening readings. Those who do not want to be on camera may choose to sit in a portion of the room that is off camera; or the group conscience could decide that if there is anyone who does not agree to being on camera, then the virtual meeting will be held separately from the in-person meeting.
- The group may want to make a sign for the door of the meeting space to say something like, “Hybrid meeting in progress.”
- Will your group’s business meeting also be hybrid so that members who are only attending virtually still have a voice?

- Whose equipment will the group be using to connect the virtual and in-person meetings? The group will want to be sure it's not violating the **6th tradition** and setting themselves up for problems of money or property.
- How will you collect **7th Tradition** for virtual attendees? (Each group is autonomous.) Some suggestions and guidelines for virtual baskets are available [here](#).
- Consider costs & availability of technology, wifi, tech knowledge, etc. Will the group purchase their own account / technology or use a group member's?

## Checklist

- The group may want to establish **additional service positions**, such as virtual meeting host, and technical person. The group will need to ask if they have enough members to support these extra service positions. The virtual hosts should be trained in hosting on the platform you decide to use, including the sharing and security features.
- Sufficient **access to internet service**.
  - If the group is planning to use the venue's wifi, they should make sure that it is sufficiently strong and fast for video conferencing, and that they have permission to do so.
  - If the group is going to rely on a phone or tablet hotspot, does your venue have sufficient service to allow for video conferencing? Does the member lending their device have a large enough data plan?
- **Devices and audio/visual equipment:** we need to allow access for all who wish to participate.
  - A laptop with the accessories below would provide a better experience for the virtual attendees rather than a hand-held phone or tablet.
  - Additional equipment a group may want to consider includes:
    - Omnidirectional microphone - \$30-\$90 (higher end models may include speakers)
    - Speakers - \$20 - \$50 (if not included with microphone)
    - Swivel USB Camera - \$45 - \$100
  - A separate monitor, smart TV, or projector - This would allow the in-person attendees to see the virtual attendees. Some Groups rent space from places which have a conference room, or classroom which may include large monitors, or TVs, or the possibility for connecting to a projector.
- A dependable **virtual conferencing account**.
- The group may need to update the meeting format to include both in-person and virtual sharing.
  - The most simple format for a hybrid meeting is an Open Speaker meeting, where only the Leader, and Speakers need to be on screen.
  - The group will also need to decide how they call on members who have their hand raised (either in person or virtually). For example, a group could alternate between in-person and virtual.

**Once all decisions have been made**

- Please update your group in the Area 48 Registrar's listing to reflect that you now have Hybrid meetings by following this link to the [Group Change Form](#).
- Also be sure to contact your district records keeper.

## Traditions to consider

5th: Features such as "Only allow individuals with a given email domain to join" may be too restrictive for inclusivity.

6th: When using personal equipment, the group will want to be sure it's not violating the 6th tradition and setting themselves up for problems of money or property.

7th: How will you collect 7th Tradition for virtual attendees. Some suggestions and guidelines for virtual baskets are available [here](#).

11 & 12: Cameras in A.A. Meeting Rooms will raise lots of tradition concerns. Specifically, our 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Traditions of Anonymity. For meetings with publicly listed log in information (such as on an area meeting list website), non-members can easily access our meetings. In general, we want security low enough that anyone seeking recovery can find us. However, when we lower the security, we also increase the chance of our "safe space" being violated. The group should come to a group conscience on their "security tolerance."

Most of these considerations have been addressed many years ago by the Online Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous. This is a link to their Anonymity and Privacy page: <https://aa-intergroup.org/about-aa/anonymity/>

And a link to the A.A. Guidelines on the Internet: [https://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/mg-18\\_internet.pdf](https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/mg-18_internet.pdf)

You can find hybrid meetings within our area here: <https://aahmbny.org/meetings/>.

If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments about this document, please send them to [hybrid@aahmbny.org](mailto:hybrid@aahmbny.org).