

# South African National Convention Guidelines

## Introduction

The annual National Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous South Africa takes place over Easter weekend each year. It is held under the auspices of the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous South Africa.

Although the purpose of the convention is to provide fellowship to AA members it has also, over time, become a source of funds for GSO. It should, however, not be considered as a fundraising event.

The Conventions normally follow a similar program, but it is not style or form that matters so much as the spirit and feeling behind it.

"We used to be sceptical about large AA gatherings like conventions, thinking they might prove too exhibitionist. But, on balance, their benefit is huge. While each AA's interest should centre principally in those about him and upon his own group, it is both necessary and desirable that we all get a larger vision of the whole." - Bill W. letter 1956.

## Convention Host Area

(Conference 2022 Advisory Action) Rotation of Convention to revert to rotation between the six

main Regions of South Africa i.e., Kwa-Zulu Natal, Johannesburg West Rand, Western Cape, Northern Provinces, Eastern Cape and Johannesburg East Rand/Mpumalanga.

This is just the way things have worked out and is by no means guaranteed that the Convention is always rotated in this order.

The Regional Trustee for the region wishing to host Convention will apply to Conference for permission to host the Convention in a certain year.

The Region will decide which of its' areas will host the Convention.

The Regional Trustee of the hosting area is responsible for ensuring that these guidelines are adhered to.

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## Organising Committee

The host area is responsible for the election of the Chairperson who then selects the Convention

committee, which is usually organised along functional lines, with each chairperson responsible

for a phase of the planning. Here is how a typical committee might be arranged:

**The Chairperson** (assisted by one or two co-chairpersons) oversees the entire convention; coordinates the work of subcommittee chairpersons; keeps informed on the progress of all the

arrangements; calls committee meetings when needed.

**The Secretary** keeps all written records, including minutes of the committee meetings; also sends out notices of committee meetings and other mailings to committee members.

**The Treasurer** is, of course, responsible for all money, including revenues from registration;

pays all bills; usually advises the chairperson on cash supply and income flow, as well as rate of

expenditures. The Treasurer is also responsible for:

Opening a bank account in the name of the organising committee with all transactions authorised by at least two signatories.

Investing excess funds raised prior to Convention in an interest-bearing bank account in the name of the committee.

Drawing up a budget for fund raising and Convention expenses which should be submitted to the Conference preceding Convention for approval.

Banking of all funds raised during and prior to Convention.

Payment of all expenditure.

Keeping books of account for all income and expenditure and the winding up of Convention

Funds within three months of Convention.

A 2018 Conference Advisory mandated that after paying Al-Anon their pre-arranged share of funds (please see separate section on Al-Anon) that 70% of the surplus should be paid to GSO and 30% to the local Area.

The final accounts should be submitted to GSO within three months of Convention

Experience indicates it is best if the treasurer is a person with four or more years' sobriety and some solid business experience

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## **AA and Al-Anon**

How do AA and Al-Anon cooperate in National Conventions?

In accordance with the Twelve Traditions, a convention would be either an AA or Al-Anon convention, and not both.

However, most AA convention committees invite Al-Anon to participate and plan their own

program. The committee arranges for facilities for the Al-Anon meetings.

Should an AA convention committee contribute to Al-Anon from the financial profits of the convention?

- In accordance with the self-support Traditions of both Fellowships and to abide by the concept of "cooperation but not affiliation," it is suggested that AA should not make gifts or contributions to Al-Anon.

- Similarly, AA should not accept contributions from Al-Anon.

- If separate registrations have been kept for both AA and Al-Anon, income may be easily assigned. This is done by sharing joint revenues according to the number of registrations of each Fellowship.

## **Registration**

Registration is the main source of funds after the initial fund-raising activities. It would not seem

to be right for attendees to attend AA convention without personal identification badges.

Ensure

that these are in bold, colourful letters, so they can be read at a glance. Try not to subject guests

to more than a few minutes' wait in registering for the convention and picking up their badges.

Organise the registration process to flow smoothly and quickly.

Pre-registration should be encouraged, especially for local members, as this will speed up the registration process, as well as to eliminate holding large amounts of cash over the holiday weekend. Pre-registration cost could be offered at a discounted price.

*The suggested registration and pre-registration fee must be submitted to Conference for approval. This should form part of the treasurer's budget report.*

## **Fund - raising activities as communicated in Addendum F.1**

To align with legal requirements, the following guidelines are offered for forthcoming National

Convention and Rallies' fundraising activities:

Change the naming from 'Raffles' to 'Competition' as the NLC classifies Raffles as gambling.

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Add a question to the competition ticket. When doing so, it is not seen as a "chance" exercise, which would be tantamount to gambling. The participants have the option to not enter if they do not know the answer.

Avoid public participation in competitions held for National Conventions or any AA activity.

Avoid public participation, advertise these competitions within AA, via Area Newsletters, Convention Newsletters, AA Instant Messaging App groups etc. with payments by eft or face2face, whichever is possible for the member at the time.

### **Programme Co-ordinator**

This person usually sends invitations to speakers and panel members who chair various meetings. The invitation should include the following:

Meeting time slot

Duration of share

Meeting topic

That the meeting will be recorded, or not

Not to use full names and not to identify third parties by full names in their talks.

### **Décor Committee**

This committee is responsible for the decor and signage at Convention.

### **Recordings**

Following are some suggestions:

The recordings will be made available digitally, within the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

It is prudent to have an indemnity form signed on which speakers agree or decline to be recorded.

Members should not use their full names as recordings are being disseminated over the Internet, a public media outlet. This would be in conflict with our personal anonymity in Tradition Eleven.

A copy of recordings should be made available to GSO for archiving.

The use of video recordings is not permitted.

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### **Public Information Chairperson**

The Public Information Chairperson encourages a large attendance, adhering to AA's principle of

"attraction rather than promotion."

Publicity efforts can be kept within the dignity and spirit of AA through the following means:

- The convention publicity material should be sent to the press, radio, and TV outlets in the immediate area, (refer to the Public Information Workbook available from GSO which gives useful advice on approaching the media).
- If media or the general public are invited be sure to attend to the details of how they will be greeted and if special meetings or contacts will be set up for them.
- Preparation and distribution of material about the program to invited guests.
- Location of the convention (including a map and a pin to the area). Convention flyers are usually e-mailed monthly to the Area Committee mailing list, for distribution to all groups, with the first mailing to start about six months before the Convention date.

### **Catering**

Meals, soft drinks, sweets and light refreshments should be available for purchase.

Tea and coffee should be available at all times during the Convention.

A suitable area should be available for people to relax, chat and enjoy their refreshments.

### **Literature**

Only South African Conference Approved Literature (i.e., literature available from GSO) should be sold at Conventions.

The Convention committee obtains such literature from GSO on a consignment basis at the same prices applicable to Area, Central and District offices; and should be sold at the GSO suggested prices.

Literature not sold should be returned to GSO immediately after Convention.

The amount owing for literature sold as reflected on the invoices/credit notes issued by GSO should be paid to GSO no later than one month after Convention.

The Convention insurance policy should cover the replacement cost of all literature stock.

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### **Souvenirs**

Souvenirs sold at Conventions are another source of revenue.

The following suggestions should be considered when deciding on the quantity and quality of souvenirs:

A broad range of prices will ensure that most attendees go home with a memento of that Convention.

A lower number of individual items at reasonable prices will help to ensure that all stock is sold.

The Convention insurance policy should cover the replacement cost of all souvenir stock.

In line with AA's Tradition of Anonymity, Conference has recommended that souvenirs do not bear the words "Alcoholics Anonymous".

### **Insurance**

The Convention committee must purchase public liability insurance and replacement cover for the literature, souvenirs and any other items of stock.

### **Entertainment**

Entertainment is normally provided on the Saturday night. This may take the form of a dance, show etc. The form of entertainment is at the discretion of the Convention Committee.

### **Facilities**

The facilities committee is responsible for ensuring the cleanliness and security of the venue for the duration of the Convention.

They may do this by hiring outside companies or by using AA volunteers.

They are also responsible to set up the venue, the cleaning and returning of the venue in the state in which it was received.

An unofficial tradition that AA Convention Committees have developed over the years is: "we return the facilities we hire in a better state than when we received them."

### **Venue**

The following issues should be considered when deciding on the Convention venue:

Availability of venue.

Centrally located facilities for the sale of souvenirs, literature and recordings.

Adequate and easily accessible facilities for catering.

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Accessibility for physically handicapped persons.

Adequate and well-located parking facilities.

Availability of hotels and other accommodation.

Availability of transport between hotels and the Convention venue.

Adequate sign posting of the various meeting venues and amenities.  
Facilities for the audio recording.

### **Legal Obligations**

The Convention Committee must be aware that any activities which infringe on the laws of the Republic of South Africa, and which can in any way incriminate Alcoholics Anonymous should not be allowed.

In order to establish a legal entity that can open bank accounts and enter legally binding contracts, it is strongly recommended that the Organising Committee establish a “Voluntary Association” by adopting a Constitution in this regard (examples of the required documentation follows).

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### **Resolution to Open a Banking Account**

Resolution of the Executive Committee taken at a meeting held at .....On (Date)

.....

It was resolved that “**name of Treasurer**”, identity number “**Treasurer’s ID number**”, is

hereby authorised to open a banking account at **Bank Name** in the name of **Alcoholics Anonymous National Convention 20.....** and sign any documents relating thereto on behalf of the Association.

Further, that any two of the following members are authorised signatories on the abovementioned

bank account and that they are also authorised to use Internet banking to conduct business on this bank account:

Chairperson’s name – Identity Number .....

Alternate Chairperson or other member - Identity Number .....

Treasurer’s name – Identity Number .....

Signed at Cape Town on:

Name (Chairperson) .....

Name (Alternate Chairperson) .....

Name (Treasurer) .....

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### **Constitution of the Organising Committee of Alcoholics Anonymous National Convention 20.....**

#### **1. Name**

The name of the organisation is *The Organising Committee of Alcoholics Anonymous National*

*Convention 20.....*

The shortened form of the name of the organisation is: *AA National Convention 20...*

#### **2. Legal Personality and Nature of the Organisation**

2.1. AA National Convention 20.... is a voluntary association. The organisation exists in its own right, separately from its members and irrespective of changes in membership and Executive.

2.2. The organisation is a legal person and may conclude contracts or enter into other legal relationships. It may own assets, except fixed property.

#### **3. Aims and Objectives**

3.1. The aim of the Organisation is to organise and host the 20.... National Convention of the fellowship of Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) in South Africa.

#### **4. Income and Property**

4.1. All income of the organisation will be employed towards the organisation’s aim and

objectives.

4.2. AA National Convention 20.... will keep records of all its assets and may not give any of its money or property to its Advisory Board, office bearers or members. The only time it may do so is for work that a member may do for the organisation that non-members may have been employed to do. The payment must be a reasonable amount for the work done.

4.3. A member may be reimbursed for amounts he has paid for, or on behalf of the organisation.

## **5. Membership and General Meeting**

5.1. Members of Alcoholics Anonymous with a passion for serving the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous will be invited by existing members to join the association.

5.2. Duties of Members:

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5.2.1. Members are required to attend regular meetings of AA National Convention 20...., where they exercise their right to determine the policy of the Organisation.

5.2.2. Membership may be terminated by resignation or by the advisory board if a member's conduct is contradictory to the aims and objectives of the Organisation.

5.3. Limitation of Rights and Liabilities of Members

5.3.1. Membership of A.A National Convention 20... will not confer on any member a proprietary right, title or claim to, or any interest in, any of the property or assets of AA National Convention 20....

5.3.2. No member will, by virtue of such membership, incur any personal or vicarious financial liability in respect of any claim or action brought against AA National Convention 20....

## **6. Executive Committee**

6.1. AA National Convention 20... will be overseen by an Executive Committee consisting of no less than five (5) members. The committee shall consist of the following:

- The Chairperson
- The Alternate Chairperson
- The Treasurer
- Two serving members of the organisation
- The Chairperson may co-opt such persons as he may deem necessary to contribute to the success of the Committee.

6.2. The Executive Committee has the right to form sub-committees. The decisions made by subcommittees are to be ratified by the Executive Committee at their meeting directly after that of the sub-committee.

6.3. The members of the Executive Committee have stewardship over the assets of the organisation but have no rights to the property of the organisation.

6.4. Executive Committee members are not liable for the obligations and liabilities of the organisation.

6.5. Power and Duties of the Executive Committee:

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The Executive Committee has the duty to take such steps and adopt such measures as may be required to achieve the aims and objectives of the organisation. Its activities must abide by the law.

The Executive Committee has the power and authority on behalf of the organisation to:

- Purchase or acquire assets.
- Invite and receive voluntary contributions from members of Alcoholic Anonymous.
- Invest money in any legal manner, and in accordance with the requirements of non-profit organisations as determined by the South African Revenue Services.
- Open and operate banking accounts.
- Take part in the management, supervision and control of the organisation.
- Remunerate any person or persons for services rendered in its formation or in the development and/or administration of its business.

- Issue relevant policies and procedures for the proper management of the organisation.

#### 6.6. Meetings and Procedures of the Executive Committee :

6.6.1. The Executive Committee must hold a minimum of six (6) ordinary meetings per year.

6.6.2. There shall be a quorum of 50% of Executive Committee members plus 1 whenever such a meeting is held.

6.6.3. The Chairperson, or two members of the Executive Committee, may call a special meeting, but must inform other Executive Committee members of the date of the proposed meeting not less than 7 days before it is due to take place.

6.6.4. At all meetings the Chairperson of the organisation will preside and failing that, another member. If no chairperson is present ten minutes after the time appointed for the meeting, then those members present will, by a show of hands, elect a chairperson for that meeting.

6.6.5. At all meetings members present shall have one vote. In the case of a hung vote, the chairperson of the meeting will have the deciding vote.

6.6.6. Minutes of all meetings must be kept and be available for members to consult.

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### 7. Annual General Meeting

7.1. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of AA National Convention 20.... will be held no later than 6 months after the end of the financial year of the Association.

7.2. The meeting will address the following business:

- Read and confirm the minutes of the previous meeting
- Chairperson's Annual Report
- Treasurer's report of the annual financial statements
- Election of office bearers
- Amendment of the constitution (if any)
- General

### 8. Finances

8.1. A Treasurer shall be appointed. Duties shall include the following:

- Receive contributions from AA Groups and other sources in the Area in terms of the "Twelve Traditions" of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Keep proper records of all financial transactions.
- Report to the next Executive Committee meeting on the condition of the finances.
- Arrange for all funds to be placed in a bank account with two office bearers having joint signing powers.
- Prepare and present an annual budget.

8.2. The financial year of the organisation ends on 28 February each year. The annual financial statements for each year shall be duly approved by the Members.

8.3. All funds received for the work of AA National Convention 20.... will be paid into the banking account kept for this purpose.

### 9. Amendment of the Constitution

9.1. The Constitution may only be rescinded, amended or added to by a resolution adopted by no less than two thirds of those present at a special general meeting called for the purpose, or a general meeting of the Executive Committee.

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### 10. Dissolution of the Organisation and disposition of Assets

10.1. The organisation will be dissolved within 6 months of the hosting of the 20..... National Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous South Africa, at a special general meeting convened for that purpose.

10.2. Once the organisation has been dissolved and its outstanding debts paid, 70 percent of remaining assets will be transferred to Alcoholics Anonymous South Africa and 30 percent to "Local (Insert name)" Areas Assembly.

**11. Adoption of the Constitution**

This Constitution was approved and accepted by members of AA National Convention  
20..... at

the General Meeting held on .....

Signed at..... this ..... Day

of.....20.....

Name Signature

.....  
.....  
.....