

# AA District Sponsorship Workshop

## Facilitator Guide (2 Hours, with 15 Minute Break)

### Workshop Overview

This workshop walks members through the two sides of sponsorship: the role of a sponsor and how to use a sponsor as a sponsee. It is built from the District's Sponsorship Guidelines document and includes two 3-person panel discussions, one in each half, so members hear directly from people with lived experience on both sides of the relationship.

Total run time is 2 hours (120 minutes), including a 15-minute snack break and a bio break at the midpoint. All times below are elapsed time from the start of the workshop and can be shifted to match your actual start time.

### Roles and Responsibilities

Give each person below their own copy of this guide, highlighted to their section, at least a week before the workshop.

| Role               | Responsibilities                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Who / How Many                                   |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Facilitator (MC)   | Opens and closes the workshop, keeps the overall schedule on track, introduces each segment, and hands off to the panel moderators. Should know the Sponsorship Guidelines document well.                           | 1 person, ideally the District Sponsorship Chair |
| Panel 1 Moderator  | Introduces the three panelists, asks the prepared questions on the Role of a Sponsor, manages time, and opens the floor for a few audience questions. Can be the same person as the Facilitator.                    | 1 person                                         |
| Panel 2 Moderator  | Same duties as Panel 1 Moderator, but for the How to Use a Sponsor panel. Can also be the Facilitator.                                                                                                              | 1 person                                         |
| Panelists, Panel 1 | Experienced sponsors who speak from personal experience on what a sponsor does, does not do, and how they guide a newcomer. Send them the Panel 1 questions a week ahead so they can reflect, not script an answer. | 3 people with solid sponsorship experience       |
| Panelists, Panel 2 | Members who can speak candidly about being a sponsee: how they chose a sponsor, set expectations, and stayed consistent and honest. A mix of newer and longer sober members works well here.                        | 3 people                                         |

| Role                     | Responsibilities                                                                                                                              | Who / How Many                          |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Hospitality Volunteer    | Sets up snacks and drinks before the workshop starts, runs the break, and handles cleanup at the end.                                         | 1 to 2 people                           |
| Resource Table Volunteer | Sets up and staffs a table with the Sponsorship Pamphlet, the Big Book, and the 12 and 12 for anyone who wants to take a look or take a copy. | 1 person                                |
| Timekeeper               | Optional if the Facilitator wants a dedicated person. Gives a quiet 5 minute warning before each segment ends so panels do not run long.      | 1 person, or the Facilitator doubles up |

## Materials and Room Setup

- Sign in sheet and name tags at the entrance
- Chairs arranged so the audience can see the panel table clearly, plus a small table and 3 chairs at the front for each panel
- Wall clock or visible timer for the Facilitator and Timekeeper
- Printed copies of the panel questions for each moderator and panelist
- Resource table: Sponsorship Pamphlet, Big Book, The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions
- Snacks, coffee, and water for the break
- Notepad or index cards at each seat if you want to collect audience questions in writing

## Run of Show

| Time         | Segment                             | Length | Lead                    |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|--------|-------------------------|
| 0:00 to 0:08 | Welcome and why sponsorship matters | 8 min  | Facilitator             |
| 0:08 to 0:20 | Presentation: The Role of a Sponsor | 12 min | Facilitator             |
| 0:20 to 0:45 | Panel 1: The Role of a Sponsor      | 25 min | Moderator + 3 Panelists |
| 0:45 to 0:52 | Audience Q&A on Panel 1             | 7 min  | Moderator               |
| 0:52 to 1:07 | BREAK: snacks and bio break         | 15 min | Hospitality Volunteer   |

| Time         | Segment                                  | Length | Lead                    |
|--------------|------------------------------------------|--------|-------------------------|
| 1:07 to 1:17 | Presentation: Being an Effective Sponsee | 10 min | Facilitator             |
| 1:17 to 1:42 | Panel 2: How to Use a Sponsor            | 25 min | Moderator + 3 Panelists |
| 1:42 to 1:55 | Open discussion: other questions         | 13 min | Facilitator             |
| 1:55 to 2:00 | Wrap up, resources, closing              | 5 min  | Facilitator             |

## Resources

- Sponsorship Pamphlet
- Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book)
- The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions

## Pre-Workshop Checklist

- Recruit 6 panelists total: 3 experienced sponsors for Panel 1, 3 members for Panel 2, at least 2 weeks out
- Confirm the Facilitator and the Panel 1 and Panel 2 Moderators (these can be the same person)
- Order Sponsorship Pamphlets from GSO for the resource table.
- Send each panelist their questions 1 week ahead so they can reflect, not memorize a script
- Reserve the room and confirm seating for the audience, plus a small panel table up front
- Arrange snacks, coffee, and water for the break
- Print this guide for the Facilitator and both Moderators, and print the panel questions for each panelist
- Set up the resource table with the Sponsorship Pamphlet, Big Book, and 12 and 12
- Prepare a sign-in sheet and name tags if needed.

### Resources:

[Questions and Answers about Sponsorship pamphlet](#)

[Sponsorship with AA's Three Legacies](#)

[Sponsorship: A Vital Stepping Stone to Service and Sobriety](#)

## Workshop Format:

### Welcome and Why Sponsorship Matters (0:00 to 0:08)

- The Serenity Prayer
- Responsibility Statement  
**"I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."**
- Pass the basket for the Group and their hospitality

**Facilitator opens with a short framing on why sponsorship matters, drawing on these questions from the Guidelines:**

Many A.A.s, not just newcomers, don't know much about AA or how it works beyond the meetings they attend. Would you join an organization about which you have no idea how it works? Maybe at first, but it's crucial that we ALL learn more about the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts for World Service IF we want to have enjoyable long-term sobriety.

One of the primary reasons for this workshop is to help people understand how to sponsor.

Here are some good Questions to ask yourself that a Sponsor can help answer:

- Have you heard of the 3 Legacies: Recovery, Unity, and Service?
- And do you understand their role in your sobriety?
- Why are the Traditions read at each meeting, and where do they come from?
- How do I keep using the 12 Steps to grow and deepen the "Joy of Living" we hear about?

**Close this segment by explaining the format: two presentations, two panels, a break in the middle, and time for open questions at the end.**

Today's workshop will follow a fairly rigid structure so we can get the most out of it in the next two hours. There are two main sections with a break between. The first section covers sponsors and sponsorship. The second is about sponsees. A panel discussion will be featured during both. And we hope you'll ask questions after their discussion. During the break, we'll have snacks and drinks.

So, let's get started with the first speaker.

Introduce Speaker 1:

### Presentation: The Role of a Sponsor (0:08 to 0:20)

#### Suggestions for choosing a sponsor

These are just suggestions. But as with all suggestions in AA, they are the result of a long history of what has worked for most people to improve their sobriety and quality of life. There are exceptions to these suggestions, obviously. For example, if you have long-term sobriety, it may be difficult to find someone with more time to be your sponsor.

- Has completed the 12 Steps WITH a sponsor and has been sober long enough to be involved in service
- Attends meetings regularly
- Has a sense of serenity, honesty, and integrity that attracts you
- Has and uses a sponsor themselves
- Is active in service

Beyond these, you do not need anything in common with a sponsor other than recovery and alcoholism. The key is this:

DO NOT Sponsor yourself. If you don't have a sponsor, you're more than likely doing exactly that.

### **What a sponsor does**

There are many ways to sponsor newcomers to help them achieve sobriety and serenity through a spiritual awakening, but here are a few suggestions to keep in mind.

- Sponsorship can become a long-term relationship, but at the beginning, you are NOT “friends” in that sense. (He / She doesn't ask you to solve things for them)
- A Sponsor takes you through the Big Book and ALL 12 Steps, helping through sharing their OWN experience with each step. During these talks, you learn about each other.
- A Sponsor is in meetings you attend, meets with you regularly outside of meetings, and is available to help you practice the 12 Steps when you face difficulties, pain, and the adversity that will surely come as you stay sober.
- A Sponsor introduces you to other members and ensures you are familiar with AA literature such as the 12 and 12, As Bill Sees It, The Grapevine, and, of course, the Big Book.
- A Sponsor also: Admits “I don't know” in unfamiliar situations; urges the newcomer to be involved in Group activities as soon as possible; tries to introduce you to other meetings in the area.
- A Sponsor guides the newcomer on what is “appropriate to share,” the procedures for meetings, how to dress and share with self-respect, and how to chair a meeting when the time comes.
- A Sponsor may talk with family about Al-Anon family group and Alateen when appropriate.

### **What a sponsor does not do**

- Give medical advice about physical or mental health
- Impose personal beliefs about God, politics, or other members
- Lend money or housing, or enter into business arrangements with a sponsee
- Allow the sponsee to postpone the important step work
- Allow the sponsee to be victimized or preyed upon by other members
- Enter into a romantic relationship with a sponsee

### ***Introduce the panel about Sponsorship***

We've asked a few people to discuss their experiences as sponsors. I'll turn this over to **(insert name)** to introduce the panel.

### **Panel 1: The Role of a Sponsor (0:20 to 0:45)**

**Three panelists with solid sponsorship experience. The moderator briefly introduces each panelist, then works through the questions below, leaving room for panelists to build on each other's answers.**

- How did you know that you were ready to sponsor? What were your concerns?
- Walk us through what the first few weeks with a new sponsee actually look like.
- What is on your "does not do" list, and why does that boundary matter to you?
- How do you help a newcomer understand the Traditions and anonymity early on?
- What does a sponsor do in the event of a relapse?
- What do you do when a sponsor-sponsee pairing just isn't working?

**Add or remove questions as time permits.**

**Invite questions from the audience. Reserve the last 7 minutes (0:45 to 0:52) for a few audience questions to the panel.**

### **Facilitator introduces BREAK (0:52 to 1:07)**

15 minutes for snacks and a bio break. Hospitality Volunteer manages setup and cleanup. Give a 2-minute warning before the break ends so people are back in their seats on time.

### **Presentation: Being an Effective Sponsee (1:07 to 1:17)**

**Moderator 2 reconvenes the workshop and begins the second half presentation.**

Welcome back. In the second half of the workshop today, we'll focus on the sponsee. A sponsor-sponsee relationship is a two-way street. Just as the sponsor has certain responsibilities, the sponsee also has a few.

Willingness to engage as a sponsee depends on a desire to live in happy sobriety. These suggestions are to help a sponsee enjoy better sobriety and quality of life.

#### **Your role as a sponsee**

- Communicate: be assertive enough to ask, *"Will you take me through the Steps and the Big Book from the beginning through page 164, and then help me understand the Traditions and Service in AA?"*
- Be clear on expectations: ask your sponsor what they expect of you, how often to call, and when you will meet
- Consistency: attend meetings regularly, and call and discuss both simple and hard things with your sponsor
- Honesty: ask questions, tell your sponsor when you really need to talk, and do not expect them to be a mind reader
- Integrity: be as honest as possible at every point in your spiritual journey

**Introduce the panel about finding and using a sponsor.**

We've asked a few people to discuss their experiences as sponsors. I'll turn this over to **(insert name)** to introduce the panel.

### **Panel 2: How to Use a Sponsor (1:17 to 1:42)**

**Three panelists speaking as sponsees, a mix of newer and longer sober members, works well. The moderator introduces each panelist, then works through the questions below.**

- How did you approach someone and ask them to be your sponsor? What did you actually say?
- What expectations did you and your sponsor agree on early, like how often to call or meet?
- Tell us about a time when being consistent or being honest with your sponsor was hard. What happened?
- How do you make sure you are not expecting your sponsor to be a mind reader?
- What would you tell someone who is afraid to ask for a sponsor?
- If I am in AA, can I have a sponsor who is not?
- When can I sponsor someone, and how do I know what to do?
- Can you change sponsors, and how?

**Add or remove questions as time permits.**

**Invite all panelist to the front to field questions from the audience about being a sponsor or sponsee?. Reserve the last 12 minutes (1:42 to 1:55) for a few audience questions to the panel.**

### **Wrap Up, Resources, and Closing (1:55 to 2:00)**

**Facilitator returns to the podium to close out the workshop.**

Thank you for coming today. We hope you learn something about sponsorship and how to be a better sponsor and sponsee.

A reminder that we have pamphlets on sponsorship in the back. A special thanks to all the panelists, moderators, and volunteers who made this possible.

Remember, sponsorship, on both sides, is one of the clearest ways to practice Step 12 and stay connected to the fellowship. Before we leave today, let's have a quick word about Anonymity as a spiritual foundation.

Tradition 12 is read at the start of every meeting, and closes with *"who we see here, what is said here, let it stay here."*

Tradition 11 extends that anonymity to press, radio, film, and now social media.

Being anonymous means more than staying quiet about others. It means recognizing that no one is more important than anyone else, that we are all equals, no matter our disagreements, and that we respect everyone's privacy.

A sponsor's job is to help a newcomer understand this early on, including why we do not post about our sobriety publicly, why doing so can accidentally out someone else, and why bragging about sobriety can backfire if a relapse follows.

So, in closing, let's recall the Responsibility Statement:

**"I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."**