

Orientation & Guidelines for Sponsoring a Prisoner

Congratulations on your decision to become a Sponsor-by-Mail (SbM) for a prisoner who is seeking a sponsor from SA for support in achieving recovery from addiction. This service can be very rewarding for you, the sponsee, and your respective fellowship. Many SbM's have found it to be an important part of many aspects of their Recovery, as well as other areas of their life.

Suggested Sponsor Requirements

There are some suggested requirements to meet before getting started as a sponsor:

- You are working the **12 Steps of SA** with a sponsor.
- You have at least six months of continuous sobriety and **have worked Steps Six and Seven with your sponsor, who has worked all twelve steps**. This will help prepare you to receive your sponsee's Fifth Step.
- **Relapsing:** If you should relapse, it will be up to your sponsee to decide if he or she would like to continue working with you or request another sponsor. (Please consult with your own sponsor and local CFC chair for their input.)
- **You commit to help your sponsee(s)** work the 12 steps of SA, provided he or she is willing to do whatever it takes to recover.
- **You are regularly able to respond** to letters and contact from your sponsee within a few days to a week of receipt. Bear in mind that all outgoing & incoming correspondence is often delayed due to screening by prison staff. If possible, let him/her know in advance when you are going to be on vacation, out of town on business, etc.

If your **Intergroup or group** has a [sponsoring prisoners meeting](#), you will need to receive **written permission** from your sponsee to read his or her letters and step work to the group.

In most cases, you will receive requests for sponsorship from your local SACFC Coordinator. If you've questions, please email mesam93@gmail.com

Occasionally, your sponsee may give you the names of other prisoners as well. You are free to either sponsor them yourself or pass on their names to either your local CFC Chair or coordinator. If you live in the EMER region, the Latin American region or another region, please contact your local CFC or the regional CFC Chair. If you are not sure who to contact, send your request to sacfc1@gmail.com or email mesam93@gmail.com

Prison Regulations

- Before you write to a sponsee for the first time, you may need to research any page or mailing weight limits on correspondence imposed by the facility. Some facilities also have restrictions on scented paper, paper clips, staples, printed images, address labels, even sending stamps, etc.
- If you do not adhere to them, your correspondence will be delayed at best, or you may be blacklisted from writing your sponsee. This information can usually be found on the official website for the facility. If you do not have web access, or if you need any assistance with this research; please contact your local CFC Chair for help.

The Introductory Letter

Once you are aware of the restrictions regarding correspondence with your new sponsee, write an introductory letter as soon as possible. Please use the sample letter on Page 5 as a guide. Try to answer all questions your sponsee may have asked in his/her inquiry letter. Please be mindful of the following:

- Some sponsees have limited education. Use simple language and assess the language level from his/her request letter. Again, keep it simple in your correspondence, accordingly.
- Some sponsees are not in protective custody and this means they are housed with the prison's general population. Much of the stigma that exists in the free world about sexual addiction is more extreme in a prison environment, even life-threatening, in higher level security facilities.
- In most cases, your SA sponsee will have concerns about his/her fellow prisoners learning about his/her conviction, past, behaviors, attitudes, etc.
- You will want to assure the sponsee that our program adheres to the 11th and 12th Traditions regarding anonymity [refer to the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.]
- It is a good idea to inquire about your sponsee's concerns in your first letter. Please use the attached questionnaire, see the sample introductory letter on page 5 of this packet for a suggested approach.

Prisoner Anonymity

As mentioned, concerns about anonymity may have already been expressed by the sponsee in his/her inquiry letter. If so, reassure your sponsee that SA anonymity is strongly preferred.

- By the time you receive your sponsee's First Step, hopefully he/she will have answered your questions about their own confidentiality. Those issues are handled on a case-by-case basis. In some prisons, SA is supported by the administration: meetings are

announced, held weekly, offenders are housed in separate wings, in protective custody, email communication may be possible, etc. In the ideal situation, your sponsee will be able to keep SA literature and, CD testimony or other media without fear of reprisal. If that is the case, he or she can order SA literature from Central Office (most items are free of charge to incarcerated members) using the Prison Literature Request Form.

Covid 19: Many men and women have been forced to relocate to other parts of their facility, slowing the mail process. Please be patient with your sponsees, many of whom are new to the process, and encourage them to update you.

- It is also ideal for your sponsee to attend SA meetings held in his or her facility. If his facility doesn't offer one, please see your local CFC Chair about the procedure for getting one started, refer to '[Prison Group Service](#).' If you are interested in providing visitation, or starting a sponsor by mail meeting, you are free to use meeting formats developed by the SA Southwest Region. Please consult with the SACFC or your local CFC Chair about the procedure for getting one started and presenting the idea to your sponsee.

Some prison regimes do not allow SA. It may be preferable for your sponsee to attend AA meetings if offered in his/her facility. If having SA literature poses a risk, your sponsee can read the AA Big Book, replacing drinking with lusting. If the prison does not have the AA Big Book, please consult your local SACFC Chair or coordinator for ordering the AA Big Book from **AA World Services**. In all cases, we refrain from overt sexual references in correspondence, though a sponsee may well need to use such language in their correspondence. The rule of thumb here: **Always encourage language you would want to use and hear in a meeting.**

Working The Steps

- When it comes to sponsorship, we have found there is no 'one way'.
- We do suggest you have your sponsee get to know you - by sharing your First Step or aspects of your own story, - no more than a few pages, perhaps along with the first two pages of the Tucson Ray Step Guide Packet, named for its author.
- When you receive your sponsee's step-work, you might respond with your comments on his or her own appropriateness, completeness, and honesty. Remember, it is good practice to offer suggestions on the completed step. Return any new suggestions on the work and enclose the assignment for the next Step. (For the sake of time lag due to mail and reply, you may want to work the Steps in pairs—2 & 3, 4 & 5, and 6 & 7.) When a prisoner is struggling or having difficulties, this is an opportunity to share your experience, strength, and hope.
- We don't stray into advice, sharing our own personal experience, that is relevant to your sponsee. If you are reading letters in a sponsoring prisoners group, you will also share the Experience, Strength & Hope of the collective group conscience by permission.

- In all your correspondence, it is well to emphasize the importance of the Solution, both sobriety and recovery. A good way to do this is by opening each letter with an introduction, like: “My name is _____, and I’m a happy and grateful recovering sexaholic. I’ve been sexually sober for _____, and I’m working Steps _____ with my sponsor this month. I intend to complete my step-work by the end of the month.” Encourage your sponsee to do the same.

Special Tips

- **Anonymity.** Protect your own by using *only the initial of your last name unless it is prohibited by the sponsee’s facility*. We also highly recommend using a P.O. Box rather than your personal address. If you do not have one of your own, you are welcome to either share one with another sponsor by mail or plan with your local CFC Chair to have correspondence either faxed or scanned & emailed. You may wish to have your Intergroup use a spreadsheet or a log to track SA jail mail received and forwarded, by date, sponsor, sponsee and prison location.
- **Postage.** Double check to ensure that you have accounted for any possible charges for extra thickness & weight. Returns can cause delays of more than a week.
- **Personal connection** is vital. While your personal story may be typed, all your correspondence may include a handwritten cover letter in the first person. We always share from our own experience and observations. It is also a good idea to save/copy all correspondence both to & from your sponsee for later reference.
- **Motivation in prison** can be a problem, just as on the outside. In time, your sponsee will hopefully see that sobriety and recovery must be for him/her, and not to impress family members, prison parole, administrators, judges, etc. The reasons for recovery are many; we do not judge others as to why they have come to SA, as long as the primary purpose is to become sexually sober and free from lust.
- **Boundaries.** We are not pen pals. You will instinctively know how to be both understanding & firm, and when to ask more experienced SbMs for feedback. Please feel free to contact the SACFC and your sponsor for suggestions. Important: refrain from sending sponsees any money, gifts, etc. or any literature other than SA & AA, and even those purchases should be funded by your local CFC or Intergroup. These are considered contraband.
- **Willingness.** If you don’t hear back from a sponsee, it may be that 1) the letter from either you or him/she didn’t go through, 2) he/she was transferred to another facility, or 3) delay in response for reasons you may not yet know. Send a follow-up letter after a month including a copy of your unanswered letter and step. If you still don’t hear from him/her after another 2 months, send a brief inquiry follow up, mentioning you will be available for sponsorship whenever he/she is willing, once you hear from him/her.

Parole Hearings and Release

- **Parole hearings** require special attention. Help the sponsee approach them with a positive attitude, but without attachment to a specific outcome. Surrendering the outcome is essential here.
- **Release** is a difficult transition for most men and women. As for most of us, any major change can easily distract us from our program, and we may find ourselves slipping into old habits; isolation and increased temptation. If your sponsee is bound to be released outside of your own local area (as is often the case), it is your responsibility to:
 - **Provide your sponsee with information** for the CFC and/or SA fellowship nearest to his/her intended residence, and vice versa. Call the SA Central Office for more information.
 - **Encourage him/her to attend a meeting** on the first day of release if possible, attend as many as are available during the transitional period. You and your sponsee may be willing to continue this arrangement on the outside.
 - **It may be best for the sponsee** to contact a new sponsor in person to continue recovery. You want to reflect on what is always best to support the SA leaving prison. Refer to *'So, You're Leaving Prison'* pamphlet available from sa.org, your local CFC or SAICO.

A Final Word

As we continue to share our experience, strength, and hope with those who are most in need, we find much satisfaction in this work and abundant blessing for our continued Recovery. You will come to understand the wisdom of the 12th Step: we simply cannot keep what we've been given without giving it away!

SAMPLE INTRODUCTORY LETTERS TO SPONSEES

Introductory Letter #1 to a Sponsee

Dear _____,

Congratulations! You have shown the courage to investigate the recovery program of SA. Through this program, many sexaholics are living happy & useful lives, and have been sober for years, even decades! You can too, if you are willing to do what they have done to recover.

I have agreed to be your Sponsor-by-Mail and will guide you through the 12 Step program of SA to the best of my ability, for as long as you are willing to do the work required. I will share my experience, offer suggestions as they may be needed, and do my best to answer any questions you may have about sobriety & recovery.

Before we begin, I have some questions for you. Are you in protective custody for your conviction? If not, would ordering/possessing SA literature or certain forms of correspondence with me put you in harms way? If so, please explain to me about your situation and specific concerns, and we'll find solutions to overcome any obstacles that exist. Either way: you CAN

complete your step-work in a way that won't jeopardize your safety. will make every effort to respond to your letters within a week after receiving them. If a month ever goes by since your last letter, and you haven't heard from me, then it is most likely that one of our letters didn't go through, and I encourage you to follow up with another message. I will do the same if I ever don't hear from you in 2 months.

Sobriety, a changed life, and many other blessings are within your grasp! I look forward to receiving your next letter soon!

Your Sponsor-by-Mail,

Introductory Letter #2 to a Sponsee

Dear (Sponsee)

Welcome to Sexaholics Anonymous! Thank you for contacting our fellowship through the literature request form. Below is information about the SA Sponsor by Mail Program.

My name is _____ and I am a grateful recovering sexaholic. I am glad to be your Sponsor by Mail. I am ____ years sober and am free from lust today by the Grace of my Higher Power and this program. I engaged in sexual acting out and lustful thought and behavior most of my life. This caused profound harm to myself and others as well as those I abetted in their disease. I came to SA because I badly needed help. SA is finely tuned recovery - which I need since, as a sexaholic, I carry the desire for lust in my mind and my body. I believe this program has saved my life and I know it can be of great help to others who are sexually addicted.

How the SA Sponsor by Mail Program works

- You will be expected to write out each of your 12 Steps and mail them to me at the designated return address. In addition, please list your sobriety date 'My name is _____ and I am ___ days/weeks/months/years sober' according to the SA sobriety definition, below.
- I will give you feedback for each step and send you a guide for the next. In addition, please include descriptions of your daily recovery or struggles on the inside, if they relate our work.
- Try to keep it to the step we are working on. Be as honest as can be. However, avoid any descriptions that can pose legal trouble for you, or might jeopardize your chance of parole.
- With your permission, we will read and respond to letters from prisoners at our Sponsor by Mail 12 at 12 closed SA meeting. That means only SA's can hear about your

recovery and to carry the written message of their Experience, Strength and Hope, per the 12th Step, and the 12th Tradition on Anonymity. Please let me know in your response if we may read your letters to our group.

- What is SA 'Anonymity'? An SA meeting is a sacrosanct place and a lifeline where members trust one another, can share openly and safely. You may consider our 12 at 12 meeting your 'place'. Though, if you wish to start a closed 12 step recovery meeting for fellow SA's at (your prison) please contact me by mail and I can forward your request.
- Sobriety as Defined in SA (p. 191 of the White Book): "For the married sexaholic, sexual sobriety means having no form of sex with self or with persons other than the spouse. For the unmarried sexaholic, sexual sobriety means freedom from sex of any kind. And for all of us, single and married alike, sexual sobriety also includes progressive victory over lust." (White Book, © 1989-2016)

Take a little time now to carefully read and reflect. Let us know as soon as possible if you are to be moved to another facility, or section, or once moved, please send us that updated address information.

Again, thank you for your courage and commitment to SA. Remember, 'It works if you work it!'

First name, last or middle initial

Sample FOLLOW-UP Letter to a Sponsee with a cellmate or fellow prisoner who does not condone SA

Dear _____,

Thank you for answering my questions about your situation. I am sorry to hear that you are in a prison that doesn't offer protective custody for the SA, and that you have a cellmate who doesn't respect your recovery. In that case, we will refer to the problem as addiction to the substance. After all, we've used lust as a drug, haven't we? Do you attend AA meetings offered at the prison? Do you happen to have access to a copy of the AA "Big Book?" If not, please let me know, and I will arrange to have a copy sent to you.

Concern for personal safety in the facility and mail screening:

As far as your concern regarding our letters being screened by prison staff, this is not a problem as long as we don't discuss any unknown or crimes for which we have not been adjudicated. I've included a description of my own powerlessness over this addiction and the chaos it created in my life. I've also included a guide for working your own First Step. I encourage you to work on it every day. Once completed, I'll review it and return it to you with

feedback. I may have some questions. When you are ready, we'll work on the next Step. Once we have gone through all 12 steps, I will continue to help you apply the principles of the program to your daily life and guide you through the steps in a deeper way.

From now on, we'll pay special attention to SOBRIETY and RECOVERY: our sobriety date is our first day of sobriety after the last time we "used," with or without another.

If sponsee happens to be married:

I'll explain what life is like for those of us who are married, soon. Sobriety includes progressive victory over the addiction. Recovery refers to all the changes that will take place in your thinking, feelings, and behavior as you work the Steps to rebuild your life. There's a saying: 'We don't carry the addict, we can only carry the message.' My role is to help you navigate your life in recovery. If you are willing to make Sobriety & Recovery the highest priorities of your life, one day at a time, you can count on my continued guidance.

Your Sponsor,

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Brief Survey questions, per Sponsor by mail, to be mailed with introductory letter and Step One

This survey is designed to help serve the SA Correctional Facilities Committee and the sponsee 'take ownership' of their recovery to inform the SA group conscience.

1. Is the SACFC responding to you in a timely fashion?
2. What are the ways we can better support you?
3. Do you have concerns about attending a meeting? Please explain:
4. How can we better notify the unit or facility?
5. Should we approach the facility about visitation? How would you see this happening? Who is authorized to make this decision?
6. Do you ever discuss SA with fellow men (or women) in your unit?
7. If your facility is allowing you to meet, do you have time to talk before or after your meeting to help us gather feedback?
8. Does your unit/prison allow you to receive and play audio CD's?
9. Do you have a CD player for this purpose? What does the facility require regarding shipment to you?

10. Does your facility offer JPAY or GTL? Other email? Phone calling?

11. Does your Chaplain or Supervisor wish to expand recovery to other units?

12. How would you describe your incarceration in recovery?