



Zurich AA's 24/7 Helpline FAQ's

01 September 2011

The following FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions) are provided as general information and background to allow each member to better understand this important service opportunity and how to participate in it. If you have further questions after reading these FAQ's, please bring them to the next monthly AA Zurich Intergroup meeting, or send mail to Helpline Coordinator (see page 4).

BACKGROUND

The declaration from the 30th International AA Convention of 1965 stated, "*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.*" The benefits of one sober alcoholic talking to another are immeasurable.

WHO CAN SIGN UP FOR PHONE SERVICE?

Any member of the Zurich AA community with 3 months of continuous sobriety can volunteer to take calls. If in doubt, ask your sponsor, group GSR or send mail to the Helpline Coordinator (see page 4).

WHY PHONE SERVICE IN AA WHEN WE HAVE E-MAIL?

The difference between calling a hospital's emergency room or sending them an e-mail to seek immediate medical attention is obvious. The disease of alcoholism is no less serious to the suffering (and recovering) alcoholic. The immediacy and reassurance of directly talking to a recovering alcoholic RIGHT NOW simply cannot be compared to a written e-mail.

ISN'T OUR ZURICH COMMUNITY TOO SMALL FOR PHONE SERVICE?

Despite our small size, Zurich has a very large international community, which is why we are healthily sustaining 10 English-speaking meetings a week, more than some cities in Europe with twice the population. Also our Zurich AA community is slowly growing and as we increase our Public Information (PI) efforts, attendance will likely increase even more. For comparison sake, Geneva Intergroup's 24/7 phone service averages about 15 calls per month (or 1 call every 2 days).

HOW WILL IT WORK?

The phone service approved by your Zurich Intergroup is 24 hours per day and 7 days per week. Thanks to the convenience of mobile phones and call forwarding feature, Zurich Helpline service is no different than making/taking any other call on your mobile phone.

Zurich AA's 24/7 Helpline

HOW WILL IT WORK continued

An AA Helpline service volunteer agrees to take AA calls in time blocks of one week or more. After one Helpline volunteer's time block is finished, the Helpline Coordinator simply changes the forwarding number of the Helpline to the next volunteer's mobile number. It's that simple!

HOW MANY CALLS ARE COMING IN?

The new 24/7 Helpline began 01 July 2011. Since then, the average number of calls has been 4 per month. This may increase with time, but concerns of being inundated with calls at all hours of the day or night have proven false.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT TO MY OWN SOBRIETY?

One of the benefits of Helpline service is not only for the person calling but also the person responding. Personal growth and AA unity is further strengthened, for as minimal as the effort is to be a Helpline volunteer, it does require a commitment - allowing us to practice Step 12 and Tradition 5 on a daily basis.

Also, it will not only benefit newcomers and visitors but our own Zurich community - one alcoholic will always be able to reach another alcoholic when they just need to speak to another sober member of AA.

WHAT IF MY GROUP DOES NOT WANT TO DO PHONE SERVICE?

It is solely up to individual members to decide whether or not they wish to volunteer for service. Individuals can directly contact the Helpline Coordinator to sign up for a time block (see page 4).

WHAT IF I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY OR I AM TOO BUSY?

We are not "service professionals" but recovering alcoholics doing our best to help other alcoholics in need. *There are no rules - only suggestions...* See page 3 "Suggestions for taking AA Helpline calls"

If "something comes up" then a phone alternate can cover for you by having service forwarded to them. Alert Helpline Coordinator in advance please!

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Ask your Group's GSR, contact Helpline Coordinator (xref page 4), or attend an IG meeting (the last Wednesday of each month at the Heilsarmee). For general information on IG, service work and phone service visit www.aa.org or www.alcoholics-anonymous.uk.org

Zurich AA's 24/7 Helpline

SUGGESTIONS WHEN TAKING HELPLINE CALLS

If a person calls in asking for help with their drinking problem, ask them if they would be willing to talk to a member of AA.

If they say "no", suggest that they go to an AA meeting (see meeting schedule and locations on www.aazurich.org).

If they say "yes", take their first name and phone number. Tell them that a member will call them back in a few minutes. Ask them to stay by the phone and not to tie up their line. We never give out the phone numbers of A.A. members to persons calling us **FOR ANY REASON.**

Consult your Twelfth-Step Call List and call a person in the same general area. Remember: men work with men, and women work with women. If you are having a difficult time finding someone available to call the person needing help, call the newcomer back and tell them you have not forgotten them and to please be patient. Our AA phone service is not a crisis hotline.

If you get a "crisis" call, refer the caller to an appropriate Swiss agency. If you suspect a violent or criminal situation is developing, refer to the police. We do not listen to abusive language from any caller. It is recommended that you terminate such conversations as quickly as possible.

The majority of your calls will be for general information such as "where is a meeting tomorrow?" But remember, you will be the caller's first impression of AA. Try to be warm, caring, tactful, and helpful. Use A.A. literature to help you answer additional "Information Questions". Ask your group's literature representative to order them if they do not have any on hand.

In most instances, our AA Preamble describes AA very well:

"Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any cause.

Zurich AA's 24/7 Helpline

Helpline Phone info:

076 401 93 91 Zurich AA Helpline 24/7 Service

Helpline Coordinator (Juha)

E-mail aazurichintergroup.phone@gmail.com

Helpline Sign-up*

Service volunteers with at least 3 months of continuous sobriety commit to blocks of time in one-week intervals. Minimum commitment is one week.

If you wish to volunteer for a block of time, send the Helpline Coordinator (Juha) a mail aazurichintergroup.phone@gmail.com and request it.

*After you sign up, a confirmation SMS text will be sent to you. Acceptance or denial of volunteer is at the discretion of the Helpline Coordinator.

Emergency numbers (Notfallnummern)

valid for all of Switzerland:

In case someone might need assistance unrelated to AA, below are emergency numbers. Bear in mind we're here help people to stay away from a drink and are not expected - nor advised to assist in other matters.

117 Police (Polizei-notruf)

118 Fire (Feuer-meldestelle)

144 Emergency Medical assistance and/or

044 421 21 21 The Emergency Center in Zurich is a 24-hour referral service with English-speaking operators and provides medical advice and house calls 24 hours a day.

Note! When the service is activated, understand that if you do not answer the call and the caller leaves a voice mail, he/she will hear your voice mail message. You might wish to change your message, for example, leaving last name out and/or company name/any other sensitive information out.

If caller is calling from outside Switzerland, the forwarding feature gets expensive quickly. Refer the caller to call AA in their local city/country.