

H&I VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION

INSIDE VISITATION / SPONSORSHIP SERVICE (working version)

Purpose: to connect prisoners interested in obtaining outside sponsorship (who will be at the facility for at least one year) with outside volunteers willing to provide that service. Volunteers for this service **CANNOT** go into the institution as H&I meeting volunteers; if it is discovered that a volunteer for this service is also going into the institution as a meeting volunteer, their clearance will be immediately revoked. Male prisoners will be connected with male volunteers and female prisoners will be connected with female volunteers, and members cannot volunteer at facilities where they have family members.

VISITING VOLUNTEER - person who meets one-on-one with inside A.A. member to provide potential sponsorship. The inside member is free to make a choice for sponsorship or make a request for another visitor. As with any sponsor relationship, it may be terminated by either party at any time. The volunteer may meet with the sponsee as often as agreed upon by both parties, but no less frequently than once a month. Although this service may occur at a State or Federal prison, only a simple 2-page clearance is required. Most State and Federal prisons restrict visitation to the weekends. The Visiting Volunteer is chosen by and responsible to the H&I Visitation Coordinator, at his/her discretion.

Term: no specific term limit

Qualifications: Five years of continuous sobriety including knowledge and practice of A.A.'s 12 steps and Traditions. Previous sponsorship experience required; H&I experience strongly recommended.

Responsibilities:

1. Attends initial orientation provided by Visitation Coordinator; reviews and familiarizes themselves with all materials.
2. Completes visitor application Form 106 (provided through Visitation Coordinator) and submits to institution; informs Coordinator.
3. Pending CDCR approval, arranges initial visit and notifies prisoner by mail of visitation date (appointments may be set up online through VPASS, if desired); informs Coordinator.
4. After initial visit, schedules and attends subsequent visits as agreed upon by sponsee and volunteer.
5. Within suggestions provided in pamphlet p-15, *Questions and Answers on Sponsorship*, shares experience, strength and hope in working the twelve steps of A.A. with the sponsee.
6. Reports regularly to H&I Visitation Coordinator on status.
7. If sponsee has been notified of release within six months, either assists him/her in arranging Bridging the Gap contact and the importance of getting to a meeting on the first day of release, or agrees to continue performing sponsorship function if sponsee will be released into same geographic area.

Guidelines: the following suggestions, including some from the GSO flyer F-26, *Corrections Correspondence*, provide helpful guidance on how we can be of maximum service while protecting the security of ourselves and our families; they are not guidelines on how to sponsor, but rather on how best to conduct the relationship around sponsorship in this unique environment.

- For the purpose of identification and to put the inside member at ease, we introduce ourselves by qualifying briefly.
- Let the inside member know that sponsorship helps us as much as it helps him; we are a society of equals and should “never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or spiritual hilltop”.
- Let the inside member know that he or she is not alone.
- Encourage inside members to engage in “inside” A.A. group activity (it’s a requirement for IVSS eligibility to attend inside meetings regularly).
- In the spirit of the Twelfth Tradition, respect the anonymity of our inside members.
- Share sobriety and sobriety ONLY.
- Avoid emotional or romantic involvements.
- DO NOT DISCLOSE PERSONAL INFORMATION – including last name, phone number, email, address, place of work, etc. – **one bad experience can endanger the entire program.**
- Use caution regarding financial involvements (for example accepting collect phone calls, purchasing items from the commissary, sending money etc.); as with all sponsorship relations, it is suggested to avoid activity which encourages financial dependence
- Exercise caution in divulging details which might place our families in danger, either now or in the future.
- Avoid any breach, no matter how minor, of prison visiting regulations (see CDCR publication [Visiting a Friend or Loved One in Prison](#)) or any behavior which might compromise our position.
- Keep expectations realistic – the environment may be noisy or chaotic, the wait time to see the prisoner may be longer than expected, the sponsee may not want what you have.
- Never carry messages, either verbal or written, to or from the outside.
- Realizing we only know one side of the story and to avoid potential harm, never express opinions about prison staff, policies, or practices.