



W O R L D S E R V I C E O F F I C E

2/12/2015

Dear Friend,

Numerous OA members have contacted the WSO to ask if Overeaters Anonymous has a policy regarding reading aloud from, typing, or reprinting AA literature for OA meetings. The WSBC and OA's Board of Trustees have not set a policy.

The Question of Changing Words in AA Literature

Many OA members have asked if it is acceptable to change the words "alcohol" and "alcoholic" to "food" and "compulsive overeater" when reading aloud from AA literature. The issue of whether to change words in AA's literature is a matter of respecting AA's expressed request and OA's historical relationship with AA.

Below is an excerpt of a letter from the AA General Service Office, dated January 22, 2010, that addresses this:

"Although the First and Second Editions of *Alcoholics Anonymous* are in the public domain of the United States, it has always been Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. ("AAWS") Board's position to request the cooperation of other Fellowships based on A.A.'s Steps, Traditions, etc. in protecting the integrity of the A.A. message as conveyed in *Alcoholics Anonymous*. AAWS has historically permitted the adaptation of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions by other Fellowships. However, when it comes to other A.A. materials, the Board does not feel that it is appropriate for other Fellowships to substitute any other words where the words such as "alcoholics", "alcoholism" appear in the original text.

Additionally, to permit 'adaptation' of portions of text material would tend to dilute the credibility of our literature. As may be the case with some of your own literature, A.A. material derives chiefly from experience, and, therefore, possesses a certain sense of authenticity and sincerity. If the very same material were to be published with word substitutions, depending on which Fellowship was publishing it, anyone having occasion to read two or more of these versions would have good reason to doubt the integrity of any of them."

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The Question of Typing AA Literature for Group Use

OA members have also asked about typing AA literature as written onto a piece of paper for group use, rather than asking group members to read from the published literature, such as the Big Book. An excerpt of the same letter from the AA General Service Office, dated January 22, 2010, says:

“Once again we can only request that other Fellowships cooperate by presenting any A.A. material from the Big Book in the actual context of the A.A. message.”

Two recent enquiries to AA received these responses from AA’s Intellectual Property Administrator.

In an email from September 2014 (emphasis added):

“We have no objection to your O.A. meeting reprinting brief excerpts from the Big Book for use in its meetings. Of course, we would ask that this material not be adapted, that is, this material should be ‘read (or reprinted) directly from the actual Big Book.’”

In an email from February 2015 (emphasis added):

“We would prefer that A.A. material is not photocopied or retyped, particularly large segments of A.A. material.”

The Question of Referencing AA Literature on Websites

Some OA groups have asked about including AA literature, such as the Third Step or Seventh Step Prayers, on their websites. When asked, AA’s Intellectual Property Administrator responded, in an email dated February 12, 2015, with the following request.

“We would ask that you reference page numbers **INSTEAD** of reprinting AA material on your website.”

For an example, please see the “[Program Inspiration](#)” page under *Members/Groups* on [oa.org](#).

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OA-Approved AA Literature

For OA's Statement on Approved Literature, please see the *Conference Policy Manual*, Policy 2010A.

For a list of OA-approved AA literature, please see [OA Approved Literature List](#) on oa.org on the "OA Guidelines" page under *Members/Groups*.

For additional information or enquiries about reading from, typing, or reprinting AA literature, please contact Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (<http://www.aa.org>).

Sincerely,

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