

Bridging the Gap (BTG)

*BTG Coordinator Handbook - How It Works...
Suggestions for this Twelfth Step Work*

April 2022 Rev-2.1

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About this handbook - This document is intended for the use of BTG volunteers involved with their Local, District, and Homegroup standing committees. This handbook contains suggestions and guidelines for BTG service work but is not a substitute for drawing upon the experience, strength, and hope of those with prior experience with BTG at the District, Local, and Area levels. This handbook should be used in conjunction with other AA literature referred to within each of the standing committee’s workbook and is written as though the individual Districts will perform the work. It is recognized that each locality is autonomous and that the services may be provided by other entities such as the Area level, Intergroup/Central Offices, and even individual groups.

Statement of Purpose- The purpose of “Bridging the Gap” ** is to connect a person just starting their recovery journey and to A.A. meetings in their home community. With a temporary guide they can find meetings that fit so not to reject prior to a proper investigation. Professionals researching what AA is about and to experience what a requesting individual would encounter should also use this service.

An active member of Alcoholics Anonymous will contact the person and accompany them, usually acting in pairs, to their first A.A meeting. As in all 12th step work, this activity is strictly voluntary.

Explanation of terms – Groups of Districts are often supported by a Central Service Office (CSO). An Intergroup office will fill this position in the A.A. service structure. Within this document CSO will refer to Intergroup office if that is your service structure.

The BTG Coordinator at the CSO offers support, encouragement, and tools to help make this vital 12th step work possible. CSO BTG activities include:

- To meet and correspond with representatives of local institutions to ask for permission to make this service available to their clients, patients, or inmates. It is suggested the District BTG Coordinator where the facility is located be part of any communications.
- To maintain lists of AA volunteers willing to do BTG work and to assist district BTG Coordinators to initiate Volunteer-to-Requester connections.
- To communicate and cooperate with other A.A. service entities including the standing committees of surrounding Districts, CSO's, and the Area. (BTG work may involve contacting people outside of your Area.)
- To maintain correspondence with appropriate staff members at the General Service Office in New York.
- To print, acquire, and distribute appropriate literature.

**The name "Bridging the Gap" is taken from the pamphlet "Bridging the Gap Between Treatment and A.A. through Temporary Contact Programs" (P-49). In some Areas, BTG has evolved to address the needs not only of those coming out of Treatment Facilities, but also Correctional Facilities among others. This is done either in conjunction with "The A.A. Corrections Pre-Release Contact Program" (F-162) or using locally established procedures. In either case we are reminded this is basic 12th step work. Our collective experience suggests it is best to be accompanied by another A.A. member when meeting a newcomer. Additional suggestions can be found in the pamphlets cited above.

Workflow (These are the steps in the process)

Presentation

Make the initial presentation to administrators of facilities. Make ongoing presentations to clients, patients, inmates who may then make a request to be contacted by BTG.



Contact Coordination

Create a Temporary Contact Volunteers List; ensure volunteers are trained; forward Contact Requests to the appropriate District BTG Coordinator. The District BTG Coordinator will call volunteers from the Temporary Contact Volunteers List giving Contact Request Information only to the one volunteer who accepts.



Contact

The Alcoholics Anonymous volunteer will contact the requesting person and accompany them, usually acting in pairs, to an AA meeting.



Follow-Up

Upon completion of the contact (made it to a meeting), provide follow-up to the sending BTG Coordinator for a statistics report to the district business meeting.



Reporting

Report success statistics and experiences within their District to the Local BTG Coordinator

Electing BTG Coordinators (These are suggestions. Each entity is autonomous and may use its own guidelines. CSO's may already be doing this vital work. This could be a position for the group Alternate GSRs or the district Alternate DCM)

Many BTG efforts are funded by, supported by, and responsible to their CSO, District, or Homegroup. Each will want to fully participate in the election process for the BTG Coordinator. It is recommended to use the same procedure to elect the BTG Coordinator position as for electing other service positions. It is suggested that the BTG Coordinator have at least 2 years of current, continuous sobriety and recent service experience. It is suggested that the Local BTG Coordinators strive to obtain an Alternate to assist with the responsibilities and to help develop BTG for the District. Below is a description of responsibilities and suggestions for the positions.

Responsibilities

It is suggested that people with service experience including experience with A.A.'s 12 steps fill these positions. As in all other A.A. service positions, rotation is vital to our health. To ensure continuity, it is suggested that rotation occur at the end of a two-year panel.

BTG Coordination at the district level

When BTG is just getting going in a District, it is best not to make too many commitments that may overwhelm the local structure before it is ready. At the beginning it will often be the case that only a few people in a District will be doing almost all the work. For these reasons, working with only one facility to start with is important.

Form a committee; We suggest that representation at the above meetings may be delegated to other BTG volunteers and subdivide the various components to this service work. This reduces the monthly load for the chairperson, cross-trains others, and increases awareness of BTG.

The BTG Committee:

- Has overall responsibility that District BTG activities operate smoothly.
- Responsible for ensuring that BTG activities remain focused on: **Bridging The Gap - from the Request to the AA Meeting.**
- May conduct a monthly District BTG meeting to discuss process, progress, and tasks reports.
- Responsible for collaboration and communication with various entities.
- Responsible for representation at the following monthly meeting
 - **CSO meeting.** Provide monthly tally of requests, follow-up and BTG activities within the district.
 - **District Business meeting.** Because BTG receives funding from the groups and in the spirit of cooperation and shared experience, it is highly recommended to keep your District informed of BTG activity.
 - **Local Treatment(H&I) & Corrections meeting.** To coordinate and inform them of facility activities, e.g. Treatment centers, prisons, or jails. It is best to talk with your local Treatment & Correction committees before proceeding with any facility.
 - **Local PI/CPC meeting.** Administration presentations need to be periodic. Rotation occurs in their facilities as well.
 - **Other Committees such as Literature and Accessibilities.** These are vital in the efforts.

Other Suggestions:

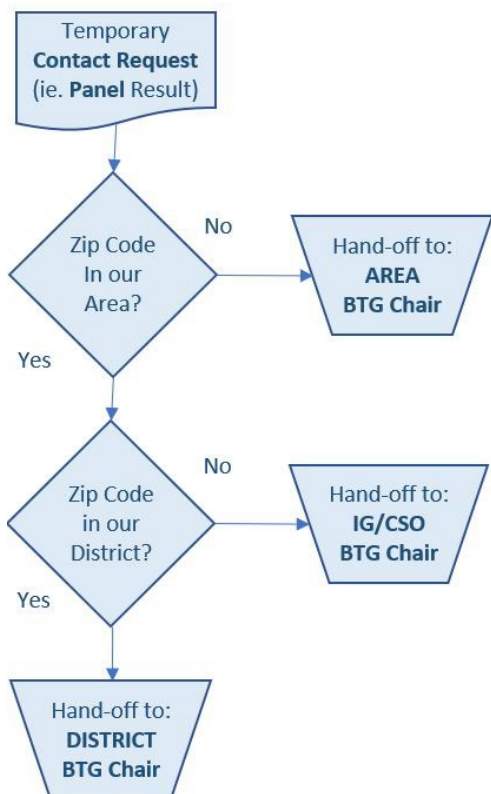
- Start small, stay focused and meet all commitments.
- Make BTG Volunteer Information available to groups. Written literature is traditional. Develop on-line access also.
- Encourage Election of a Home Group BTG Rep to help build a foundation of volunteers. Offer groups the opportunity to become involved by “adopting” specific facilities.
- Find one or two AA members to promote generating Temporary Contact Volunteers Lists at other AA functions.
- Find an AA member to coordinate Temporary Contact Volunteers List campaign.
- Continue to add to the Temporary Contact Volunteers List especially when working with more facilities.
- Hold regular BTG District-level meetings to discuss progress.
- Some Districts hold occasional workshops - offer to assist with one on the subject of BTG
- Communicate with Area BTG Coordinator and other District BTG Coordinators to share experience, strength, and hope. (Workshops or sharing sessions)

Alternate BTG

- Assists in all BTG Coordinator duties learning successful strategies.
- Logs new volunteers to the master Temporary Contact Volunteers List and ensures the list is available to Contact Coordinators.

Contact Requests Having an Address Outside Your District

Often contacts will have an address outside of your District or county. Here are some ways to reach an A.A. member in other districts.

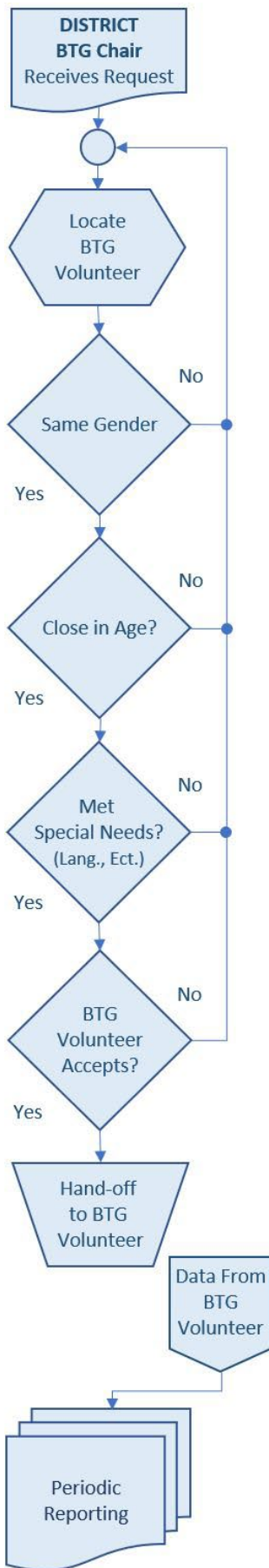


If the address is outside our CSO area: Contacting the CSO for the area you are looking for is another option. By calling 1- (Area Code)-555-1212, you can find the contact information for Alcoholics Anonymous Central Office in that location. Connecting with them may enable you to find someone who can assist you with passing along your 12th step contact information.

If the address is in another area or state: Contact the Area BTG-Chair, Treatment person, or Area Delegate.

- Regional Directories
- Correctional Facilities Committee Chairs or Contacts By Area
- This GSO list is for the 93 USA and Canada Areas.
- Contact the Central Office in or near that town.

If the address is outside your district but inside our CSO area: Use the BTG coordinators Contact list and give the requesters contact Information to the appropriate District BTG Coordinator. This list can be obtained from the CSO BTG Coordinator or Area Treatment Chair. If after a day or two you cannot reach the District BTG Coordinator call the District Committee Member (DCM).



Selecting the Temporary Contact Volunteer

This can be a busy task and may be shared by more than one person. It should be conducted by people who honor A.A.'s principle of Anonymity, as they will be entrusted with personal information about clients, patients, inmates and AA members.

- Calls/e-mails volunteers from the Temporary Contact Volunteers List and provides information from the Contact Requests
- Contacts all volunteers every 2-3 months to see if their contact information is still valid and updates information.
- Forwards Contact Requests for other Districts to the appropriate District BTG Coordinator.
- Follow up with volunteers on the completion of each contact and passes this on to the CSO BTG Coordinator on a regular basis.

Each Contact Coordinator is responsible for the timely matching of a Contact Request with a volunteer. You will receive completed Contact Request from BTG Liaisons responsible for BTG presentations inside facilities. Contact Requests may come from other sources as well.

For contacts with a ZIP code inside your District, use your district Temporary Contact Volunteers List to find a match with the Contact Request based on the following criteria:

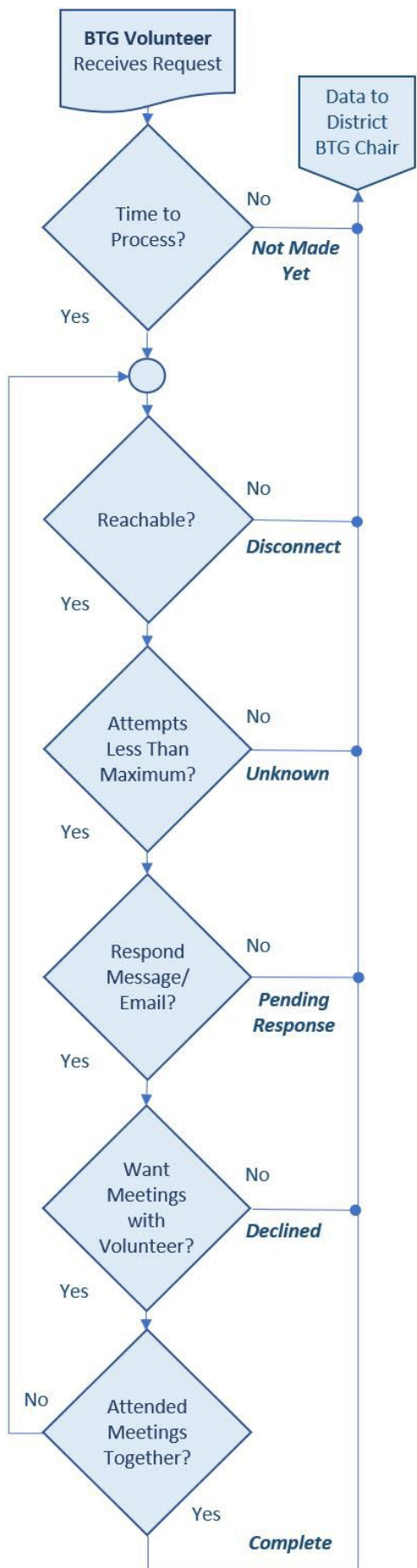
- Geographic location (Zip-Code)
- Gender
- Age
- Special request (language, etc.)

If you leave a message on an answering machine or if another person in the home takes a message, it should be like: "This was Bridging the Gap calling. Thank you." (Don't use A.A. in the message you leave). A message is not an affirmative temporary contact selection.

If you cannot find a suitable match for contacts with an address inside your district, try the following:

- Use the next closest adjoining zip code or geographic location.
- Look for the same city name.
- Look for the same telephone prefix.

Call an AA member you know personally and can trust with this important responsibility. Use AA Directory for contacts (Check with the District Committee Member [DCM]; usually they will have one).



Follow-up Coordination

Follow-up work is done to ensure that the hand of A.A. has been extended and help us to identify possible improvements. When the Contact Coordination has been completed, the job of BTG is completed.

When a Volunteer is given a Contact Request, the volunteer is asked to return a Status upon resolution of the Contact Request. Contact Requests may have the following outcomes:

The Volunteer has contacted the Requester and then:

- They attend an AA meeting together and the BTG-Request was completed. **Completion**
- Requester has not responded to subsequent contact, and BTG-Request is delayed. **Unknown**
- Requester attends an AA meeting but did not attend a meeting with the volunteer and does not need our help. BTG-Request was completed. **Declined**
- Requester does not want to go to an AA meeting. Request was completed. **Declined**

The Requester has not been contacted because:

- Wrong information was provided or person no longer at that location. The Request was not completed. (Send a letter to the last known address). **Disconnect**
- Not enough time has passed for the Volunteer to contact the Requester. **Not Made Yet**
- Volunteer initiated contact with the Requester but with no response. **Pending Response**

Suggested Reporting

The coordinators should hold on to Contact Request information for one month or until the Contact Request has been resolved. If the Follow-up Coordinator has not heard from the Volunteer within a month, the Volunteer should be called to determine how successful the Contact Request has been.

After a contact match has been secured, indicate the volunteer's name and Contact information on the Contact Request, and return it to the District BTG Coordinator.

Before the IG/CSO monthly business meeting, BTG Coordinator or their representative will deliver a report on the results of the Contact Requests for the previous month.

(See Appendix for sample BTG Report Form)

Volunteer Coordination

When first starting out, it is a good idea to give the responsibility of finding volunteers to someone other than the BTG Coordinator or Alternate. As your BTG effort grows, **finding volunteers is a key factor** in keeping things going. It may require more than one person. We suggest supplying those who are responsible for locating volunteers the information on Getting Volunteers. If your District is just starting out, it is suggested that you find a few volunteers to start working with a single facility.

Getting Volunteers

One of the best ways to find volunteers is to go to the district business meeting and speak with GSR's to bring back the service information and a Group Sign-Up Sheet. Go to Treatment(H&I), Correction, and PI/CPC committee meetings to make announcements and hand out fliers. Enthusiastic, positive sharing of personal experiences and one-on-one discussions has proven to be more effective than a simple announcement.

Members at those meetings may not volunteer but they may be able to share information about BTG and distribute your fliers to other groups. Using the help of fellow AA members can be an effective way of carrying the message. You may also want to make announcements about local BTG workshops (when applicable).

BTG-Volunteers Orientation

Experience has shown that orientation is helpful before conducting Contact calls. Typical items to cover are:

- A firm commitment is necessary.
- Be mindful of safety.
- How to use the Temporary Contact Volunteers List.
- The importance of timely matching a Contact Request with a Volunteer. The actual call to arrange to meet at a meeting should be made as soon as possible after their release from institution or facility.
- An updated Temporary Contact Volunteers List held by at least the BTG District Chairperson and Alternate has proven to be a key element for effective BTG work.
- If there is information in the back of the Contact Request on how to contact them inside, the volunteer should get in touch with the patient or inmate as soon as possible to make arrangements for meeting.
- Meeting the contact should NOT be done alone. A volunteer should choose-another-AA-member- of-the-same gender to go with them. It is suggested that at least one volunteer have 1 year of sobriety if going into a prison.
- **The volunteer needs to know that the responsibility for BTG has been turned over to them.**

You might have to explain BTG to someone who has never heard of it. An explanation could be like: "Bridging the Gap is a part of A.A. It is A.A. members meeting someone first starting recovery from alcoholism and accompanying that person to their first A.A. meeting in their home community. We do this at the request from the person who is reaching out for help."

Basic Volunteer Packet Items

We've listed some suggested items for a volunteer packet. CSO BTG Coordinator provides all the master copies for these forms in a separate package:

- Bridging the Gap Volunteer Guidelines
- Bridging the Gap (pamphlet)
- Where Do I Go from Here? (pamphlet)
- What AA is and AA isn't? (pamphlet)
- A Brief Guide to AA (pamphlet)
- Meeting schedules

Most Districts find the above items provide clear and concise information for new volunteers. However, there are other publications that may be useful. They can be obtained from your local A.A. Intergroup or Central Office, GSO or your local General Service Literature/Grapevine chairperson.

Information on AA - (GSO pamphlet F-2.)

Frequently Asked Questions About AA - (Formerly 44 Questions) - (GSO pamphlet P-2)

AA at a Glance - (GSO pamphlet F-1)

(Suggested 6 months sobriety; working knowledge of the 12 Steps and of the 12 Traditions)

- Attend an AA Meeting with the Requestor
- Report back to District regarding results of contact.

Remembering page 89 of the Big Book may help:

"Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics." (Reprinted with permission of AAWS)

12th Step Service

Our Twelfth Step - carrying the message - is the basic service that the AA Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.

---- Bill W. A.A.'s Legacy of Service (Reprinted with permission of AAWS)

Our actual 12th Step work must never be paid for. Experience has shown it is important that no funds are accepted for 12th Step work. In the spirit expressed in Bill W.'s words above, BTG is organized with the purpose of practicing the 12th Step and carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to the alcoholic who still suffers by making the program of Alcoholics Anonymous available to all those who desire its solution.

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.

Bridging the Gap Volunteer Guidelines

- Bridging the Gap is **not to be confused with sponsorship**. The intent is to provide the newcomer with your support for a limited time.
- Remember that **you are representing A.A.** How you look, act, and talk is a reflection of our fellowship.
- **Respect the anonymity** of the newcomer.
- Keep the general conversation limited to A.A. related matters, avoiding any criticism or opinions about the newcomer's situation. **Volunteers need to adhere to any rules that apply to the newcomer's behavioral requirements.**
- A.A. experience suggests that **men work with men, women work with women.**
- It is suggested that volunteers have **one year** of continuous sobriety and/or have **completed the 12 steps** of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- In all contacts it is extremely important to **be on time.**

What to bring:

[Bridging the Gap \(GSO pamphlet P-49\)](#)

[Where Do I Go from Here? \(GSO pamphlet F-4\)](#)

[What AA is and AA isn't? \(GSO pamphlet smf-128\)](#)

[A Brief Guide to AA \(GSO pamphlet P-42\)](#)

Use [A.A. Meeting Guide App](#) and print a Local Meeting Schedule Sheet

Perhaps additionally:

[Information on AA - \(GSO pamphlet F-2.\)](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions About AA - \(Formerly 44 Questions\) - \(GSO pamphlet P-2\)](#)

[AA at a Glance - \(GSO pamphlet F-1\)](#)

Bridging the Gap – Progress Report

_____ [Month(s) and Year]

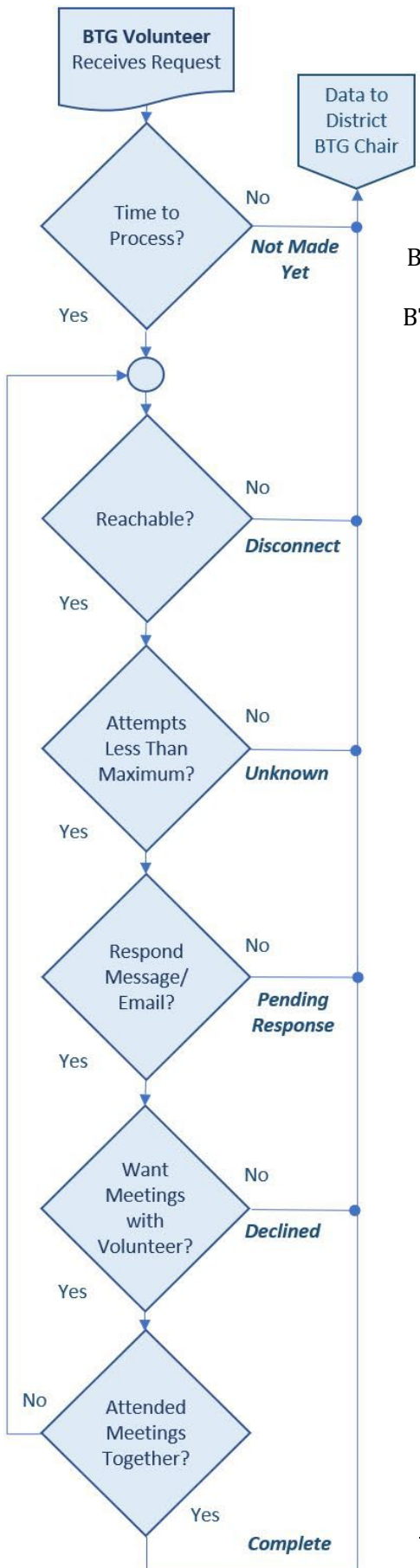
Area: _____

District: _____

BTG Chair: _____

BTG Email: _____

Data to District
BTG Chair



Statistics

Count	Condition
	Complete
	Delayed (Unknown)
	Declined
	Contact Requests Process Complete

	Disconnects
	Not Yet Made
	Pending Response
	Contact Requests In-Process

Experiences

Bridging the Gap – Temporary Contact Signup

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS™

"... nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics."

(AAWS - Alcoholics Anonymous 4th edition p.89)

We need AA members to volunteer to be "temporary contacts" (not sponsors) to help in the very important first step for alcoholics who have just been released from a detox, hospital, treatment, or correctional facility. By providing a temporary contact, Bridging the Gap (BTG) helps newcomers make the transition to Alcoholics Anonymous in his or her home community. There are medical professionals and people affected by someone else's drinking who may want to inquire what we offer. People referring others to this functioning program should know what they're sending clients or loved ones to.

Alcoholics Anonymous was founded when Bill W. sought out Dr. Bob, and the Fellowship grew because they, in turn, sought out other alcoholics. What is ever important is our responsibility to the still sick and suffering alcoholic. This successful communication is demonstrated throughout the fellowship.

This temporary contact program called Bridging the Gap (BTG) is exactly that: a temporary arrangement until the new member feels at home in AA. It is not sponsorship. This program is working successfully in many areas. Why not ours?!

GUIDELINES FOR TEMPORARY CONTACTS

Working within our Traditions, when working with a potential new member, temporary contacts will:

- Visit or speak to the alcoholic before he or she leaves the facility.
- Meet that alcoholic at AA meetings in the home community (especially on the day of release from a facility).
- Take the time to introduce that individual to other AA members.
- Explain the importance of getting - and using - AA members' phone numbers.
- Sponsorship should be explained. Information pertinent to sponsorship can be found in the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship."
- When working with non-alcoholics requesting a temporary contact (Doctor, Nurse, Family, etc.), please remember to only meet them at "Open" meetings.

Volunteers are needed. If you would like to take part in this important 12 Step Work by being a temporary contact for a newcomer being released from a facility, PLEASE JUST FILL IN YOUR NAME, PHONE NUMBER, ETC ON THE CONFIDENTIAL TEMPORARY CONTACT LIST ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS SHEET. If you have any questions, speak to a member of your home group or your home group's GSR. They will pass this contact List on to your District Bridging the Gap (BTG) chairperson.

I am responsible...

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that:

I am responsible.

Bridging the Gap – Temporary Contact Signup

Volunteers are needed... Please fill in your name and information if you are willing to be a temporary contact for a person requesting to be introduced to the fellowship. You will have an opportunity to accompany this individual to a few local AA meetings and introduce other active members of AA. Please help us Bridge the Gap into AA. Remember: "We can only keep what has so freely been given to us, by giving it away." Your help is appreciated.

This list is AA Confidential

District: _____	Date: _____
Group Name: _____	BTG Chair: Name: _____
Group GSR: Name: _____	Phone: _____
Phone: _____	Email: _____

Please circle below indicating you are willing to work with newcomers from what area of service. The information below is needed to best match you with the person requesting contact. Age Range: (Y-Young / E-Early / M-Middle / S-Senior)

Name	Gender	Y-E-M-S Age range	Specialty (Lang. etc.)	Accessibilities - Archives Bridging CPC - Corrections - Literature - PI - Panels - Phones - Treatment
Phone:	Email			

Name	Gender	Y-E-M-S Age range	Specialty (Lang. etc.)	Accessibilities - Archives Bridging CPC - Corrections - Literature - PI - Panels - Phones - Treatment
Phone:	Email			

Name	Gender	Y-E-M-S Age range	Specialty (Lang. etc.)	Accessibilities - Archives Bridging CPC - Corrections - Literature - PI - Panels - Phones - Treatment
Phone:	Email			

Name	Gender	Y-E-M-S Age range	Specialty (Lang. etc.)	Accessibilities - Archives Bridging CPC - Corrections - Literature - PI - Panels - Phones - Treatment
Phone:	Email			

Name	Gender	Y-E-M-S Age range	Specialty (Lang. etc.)	Accessibilities - Archives Bridging CPC - Corrections - Literature - PI - Panels - Phones - Treatment
Phone:	Email			

Name	Gender	Y-E-M-S Age range	Specialty (Lang. etc.)	Accessibilities - Archives Bridging CPC - Corrections - Literature - PI - Panels - Phones - Treatment
Phone:	Email			

Name	Gender	Y-E-M-S Age range	Specialty (Lang. etc.)	Accessibilities - Archives Bridging CPC - Corrections - Literature - PI - Panels - Phones - Treatment
Phone:	Email			
