

# Bridging The Gap

a subcommittee of the  
California Northern Coastal Area



## Workbook

### How It Works...

Suggestions for Twelfth Step Work  
at the District Level

*March 2012*

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**About this workbook**—this document is intended for the use of both committee members and Bridging the Gap District Chairs. The first 24 pages contain information more useful to members . The final 8 pages are specifically for BTG District Chairs. This workbook 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 and Area levels and should be used in conjunction with other CNCA and AA literature referred to within the workbook.

## Statement of Purpose

Bridging the Gap is a General Service sub-committee that supports that very important first step for alcoholics who have just been released from a hospital, treatment center or correctional facility. By providing a temporary contact, Bridging the Gap helps newcomers make the transition to Alcoholics Anonymous in his or her home community.

Members of Alcoholics Anonymous, usually acting in pairs, meet the patients or inmates after release and accompany them to their first A.A. meeting. As in all 12-step work, this activity is strictly voluntary.

The goal of the BTG Committee of the California Northern Coastal Area (CNCA) is to make this vital 12-step work possible. The committee's activities include:

- Assist General Service Districts in forming local Bridging The Gap Committees:
  - ◆ To meet and correspond with representatives of local institutions to ask for permission to work with their patients and inmates; Correspond with inmates and patients desiring Bridging The Gap on release.
  - ◆ To maintain lists of A.A. volunteers willing to do Bridging The Gap work and to coordinate 12-step calls.
- Communicate and cooperate with other A.A. service entities in Northern California including: the CNCA Area committee, the CNCA Districts, the CNCA PI/CPC committee, Northern California H & I General committee and all local H & I committees, A.A. Central Offices and Intergroups.
- Maintain correspondence with appropriate staff members at the General Service Office in New York.
- Print and distribute appropriate literature.

Our Area BTG Committee is a sub-committee of the California Northern Coastal Area General Service Committee.

## District Work Flow

### Presentation Teams

Make the initial presentation to administrators of facilities. Make routine presentation to patients/inmates who may then make request to be contacted by BTG.



### Phone Coordinators

Call volunteers from the Volunteer Phone List, give them information from the Contact Request and ask them to later contact the Follow-up Coordinator. Forward Contact Requests for other Districts to the appropriate District Chair.



### Volunteers

After the patient or inmate is released, usually two A.A. volunteers will accompany him/her to an outside AA meeting (12th step call) and then contact Follow-Up Coordinator.



### Follow-Up Coordinators

Check on success of contact and provide follow-up report to District BTG Chairperson prior to CNCA BTG Area Meeting.



### District BTG Chairperson

Reports the work that has been happening in their District. to the CNCA BTG committee

## Getting Started

The first thing to do is to elect a District BTG Chairperson who will be responsible for BTG activities in the district.

## Electing a District BTG Chairperson

Most District BTG committees in CNCA are funded by, supported by and responsible to their local General Service District, who will want to participate in the election process for the District BTG Chairperson. Most districts use the 3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy procedure to elect. It is suggested that the District BTG Chairperson have at least 2 years of current, continuous sobriety and recent service experience. We suggest that the next step is to find an Alternate District BTG Chairperson to assist with the responsibilities and to help develop a BTG Committee for the district. Below is a description of Committee member responsibilities and suggested requirements for the positions.

## District Job Descriptions

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. Rotation should always occur at the end of a two-year panel.

### District BTG Chairperson (suggested 2 years sobriety)

- Has overall responsibility for District BTG activities.
- Responsible for insuring that BTG activities remain focused on 12th step work.
- May conduct a monthly District BTG meeting.
- Responsible for representation at the following monthly meetings:
  - ◆ **CNCA BTG Area meeting.** Provide monthly tally of requests, follow-up and BTG activities within the District.
  - ◆ **General Service District meeting.** Because BTG re-

ceives its funding from General Service and in the spirit of cooperation and shared experience, it is highly recommended to keep your district informed of BTG activity.

- **Local H&I meeting.** To coordinate and inform them of facility activities, e.g. prisons or jails. *It is best to talk with your local H&I committee **before** proceeding with any facility.*

We suggest that representation at the above meetings may be delegated to other BTG committee members. This reduces the monthly load for the chairperson, cross trains others, and gives BTG greater exposure.

### Other Suggestions:

- Start small in order to stay focused and meet all commitments.
- Find one or two Volunteer Coordinators to generate a Volunteer Phone List of several volunteers. Find Phone Coordinator to coordinate Phone List.
- Choose one facility and contact the administration for a presentation about BTG. After facility approval, begin routine presentations to patients/inmates.
- Continue to add more volunteers to your Volunteer Phone List, especially when working with two or more facilities.
- Hold monthly Bridging The Gap District meetings to discuss progress and elect coordinators for facilities, if needed.
- Arrange to have other District BTG committee members attend the Area BTG Committee meeting.
- Communicate with Area BTG officers and other District BTG Chairs to share experience, strength and hope.
- Elect a Home Group BTG Rep to build a foundation of local volunteers. Some groups may want to become involved with specific facilities.
- Put BTG Volunteer Information with A.A. literature at meetings.

## **Alternate District BTG Chairperson**

(suggested 1 year sobriety)

- Assists District BTG Chairperson in all his/her duties.
- Addresses and mails New Volunteer Packets.
- Logs new volunteers to the master Volunteer Phone List and give list to Phone Coordinators.
- Submits quarterly, a copy of District Volunteer List to Area BTG Alternate Chair for Area BTG Committee records.

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## **Liaisons to Other AA Service Committees**

(suggested 1 year sobriety)

- There are many opportunities for BTG to partner with the other AA service committees.
- If the BTG Chair does not attend the following service committee meetings, consider establishing Liaison positions to attend the monthly meetings for:
- H & I - the liaison to H&I can answer questions about BTG, describe how the committees can work together and provide BTG Literature as requested.
- PI/CPC monthly meeting
- Intergroup meeting

## **Phone Coordinators**

(suggested 2 years sobriety)

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

- Calls volunteers from the Volunteer Phone List and provides information from the Contact Requests (Blue Cards).
- Calls all volunteers every 2-3 months to see if their phone numbers are still valid and gives the updated information to Alternate District BTG Chairperson.
- Forwards Contact Requests for other Districts to the appropriate District Chair.
- May follow up with volunteers on the success of each contact and passes this on to the District BTG Chairperson on a regular basis.

Each Phone Coordinator is responsible for the timely matching of a Contact Request with a volunteer. You will receive completed Contact Request from various Presentation Teams responsible for Bridging The Gap presentations inside facilities. Contact Requests may come from other sources, e.g. the CNCA PO Box or other districts. These cards will be printed on blue paper.

For contacts with an address inside your District, use your district Volunteer Phone List to find a match with the Contact Request based on the following criteria:

- Geographic location (Zip Code)
- Gender (male-male, female-female)
- 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 similar to: *"This was Bridging The Gap calling. Thank you."* (Don't use A.A. in the message you leave).

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.

## Phone Coordinators' Orientation

Experience has shown that orientation is helpful for new Phone Coordinators. Typical items to cover are:

- How to use the Volunteer Phone List.
- The importance of timely matching a Contact Request with a Volunteer. The actual 12th step call should be made no later than the day of their release.
- Volunteer correspondence and getting in touch with those on the inside when requested.
- Any special release procedures a volunteer may need to know to arrange a 12th step call at the door of a particular facility.
- An updated Volunteer Phone List held by at least the BTG District Chairperson and Alternate has proven to be a key element for effective BTG work.
- The confined person can request to be met at the door of the facility upon release. If there is information on 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.
- Generally 12<sup>th</sup> step calls 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 2 years of sobriety if going into a prison.
- It may be helpful to give the volunteer your phone number to call you in case they have questions later.
- A firm commitment is necessary on the part of the volunteer.  
**The volunteer needs to know that the responsibility for this 12th step call has been turned over to them.**

## Contacts Having an Address Outside Your District

Often contacts will have an address outside of your district. There are many different ways to reach an A.A. member in different locations.

If the address is outside your district but **inside our area** (CNCA): use the phone number list of CNCA BTG District BTG Chairperson and Alternates and give the contact information to the appropriate District BTG Chair. This list can be obtained from

the CNCA BTG Area Committee, which also has a list of cities in each county to help you find the right district. If after a day or two you cannot reach the District BTG Chairperson, try the Alternate or call a BTG Area Officer, such as the Area BTG Correspondence Secretary.

Contacting the Central Office for A.A. in the area you are looking for is another option. By calling 1-(Area Code)-555-1212, you can find the phone number of Alcoholics Anonymous/ the Central Office in that location. Calling this number during office hours should enable you to find someone who can assist you with passing along your 12th step contact information.

You might have to explain Bridging The Gap to someone who has never heard of it. An explanation could be similar to: "Bridging The Gap is a part of A.A. specifically part of the General Service of A.A. We are A.A. members doing 12th step work by meeting someone coming out of confinement and going with 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."

If the address is in **another area or state, you may also contact the Area BTG Correspondence Secretary** (Email through the CNCA06.org website: first click on the **Contact us** tab, then use the drop-down under the **Department** to select Bridging the Gap) or try phone numbers from the World Wide Temporary Contact Points (available from the Area BTG Chairperson or the US/Canada BTG Committee).

- 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.

Following up on out-of state contact requests may prove difficult. We can never guarantee that a request will be fulfilled, thus we should never commit to anything we cannot do.

## Follow-up Coordinator (suggested 2 years sobriety)

Follow-up work is done to ensure that the hand of AA has been extended. When the Phone Coordinator has followed up with the Volunteer, our job is done.

Contact Requests are resolved in a number of ways:

- The Volunteer reached the Contact Requester by phone, and then:
  - ◆ They arranged to meet at an AA meeting and the request was completed. Result: **Success!**
  - ◆ Requester is not released and Contact Request is delayed. Result: **Unknown.**
  - ◆ Requester goes to an AA meeting on his or her own or with someone else, and does not need our help. Request was completed, but did not result in a 12<sup>th</sup> step call. Result: **Refused.**
  - ◆ Requester does not want to go to an AA meeting. Request was completed. Result: **Refused**
- The Requester could not be reached due to:
  - ◆ A wrong number or disconnected phone or person no longer at that location. The Request was not completed. A letter should be sent to the last known address if possible. Result: **Disconnect.**
  - ◆ Not enough time has passed for the Volunteer to contact the Requester. Result: **Not Made Yet.**
  - ◆ Volunteer left a message for the Requester but has not heard back. Result: **Pending Callback.**

When a Volunteer is given a Contact Request, the Phone Coordinator should ask the volunteer to call them back upon resolution of the Contact Request.

### Suggested Report to the Area BTG

The Coordinators should hold onto Contact Request infor-

mation 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, X out the front of the Contact Request, write the volunteer name and phone number on the back of the Contact Request, and forward it to your District BTG Chairperson.

Before the CNCA BTG meeting in Petaluma on the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of the month (in December, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday), the District BTG Chairperson or their representative should make a report on the results of the Contact Requests for the previous month.

### Here is a suggested report:

BTG District	99
Total # presentations given	4
Total # blue cards received	6
Submitted by	Jane Doe
Contact Information	janedoe@gmail.com 510-555-1212
Comments	

## Volunteer Coordinator (suggested 1 year sobriety)

- Locates new volunteers for the district and collects their volunteer Bridging The Gap Team cards (Yellow Cards).
- Turns in the new volunteer BTG Team cards to the Alternate District BTG Chairperson.

Volunteer Coordinators are responsible for finding AA members to sign up for the Volunteer Phone List.

When first starting out it is a good idea to give the responsibility of finding volunteers to someone other than the District BTG Chairperson or Alternate. As your district committee grows, finding volunteers is a key factor in keeping things going. It may require more than one person.

The Bridging The Gap Team Cards can be used to collect the names and telephone numbers of the new volunteers. The cards are then given to the Alternate BTG District Chairperson, or whoever is responsible for the master Volunteer Phone List.

We suggest supplying one or two Volunteer Coordinators with the information on Getting Volunteers and BTG Team Cards. If your district is just starting out, it is suggested that you find 8 to 15 volunteers to start working with one facility.

### **Getting Volunteers**

One of the best ways to find volunteers is to go to H & I, District and PI/CPC committee meetings and make announcements and hand out fliers. Enthusiastic, positive sharing of experiences and one-on-one discussions have proven to be more effective than a simple announcement.

Members at those meetings may not volunteer but they may be able to carry the message 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 Bridging The Gap workshops.

### **Volunteer Packet**

The volunteer packet contains information which can be mailed or given to new volunteers as soon as they fill out a Bridging The Gap Team Card. This will help them prepare for the 12th step calls.

### **Basic Volunteer Packet Items**

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

**Thank You Letter** - Single-sided copy.

**Guidelines To Volunteers** - Double-sided copy and folded in thirds.

**How to Correspond with Someone Confined** - Single-sided copy

**White Card** - This card explains briefly, what BTG is, what AA is NOT, and how to request a BTG contact. CNCA Approved Card.

**Blue Contact Card** — Requests information for subsequent 12th Step follow-up. CNCA Approved Card.

**Bridging The Gap** - (GSO pamphlet P-49)

### **Additional Volunteer Packet Items**

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. Central Office, GSO or your local General Service Literature/Grapevine chairperson.

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

**44 Questions** - (GSO pamphlet P-2)

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

### **Volunteers**

(minimum 6 months sobriety/  
working knowledge of the 12 Steps)

- Accompany released patient/inmate to AA meeting on the outside (12<sup>th</sup> step call).
- Contact the Follow-up Coordinator. [*A BTG volunteer may also do H&I work, but not at the same facility (See H&I Pink Pamphlet, page 6)*].

### **When Volunteers Correspond**

They should be given two pieces of CNCA BTG literature; "Volunteer Guidelines" and "How To Correspond With Someone Confined". Originals for copying these items are available separately as the "CNCA BTG Originals for Copying". It is highly recommended that volunteers **not** use their home address, phone number, or full name during correspondence with those on the inside.

Volunteers should use whatever alternate address your district has chosen to use. Talk with your District BTG Chairperson on how the volunteer should include their name in that address.

## Presentation Teams

(suggested 1 year sobriety)

- ◆ Makes initial presentation to staff of facilities.
- ◆ Makes presentations to patients/inmates.
- ◆ Distributes White Information Cards which explain briefly, what BTG is, what AA is NOT, and how to request a BTG contact to inmates and patients.
- ◆ Distributes Blue Contact Cards to patients who are usually allowed to supply necessary contact information for 12th Step follow-up; inmates may not be allowed to do this depending on the security requirements of the facility.
- ◆ Collects and delivers Blue Contact Cards to the Phone Coordinator.

When a BTG committee is newly starting out in a District, it is best not to make too many commitments that may overwhelm the local structure before it is ready. Often when first starting out only a few people in the District are doing almost all the work. For these reasons, working with only one facility to start with is important.

There are two types of Presentation Teams. One is for facility staff and the other is for the patients or inmates. The staff presentation is usually done once to inform the facility about Bridging The Gap, to arrange for starting the routine presentations to the patients or inmates, and, if requested, to discuss specifics for that facility.

Your local H & I and PI/CPC committees may help direct you to the staff to contact for arranging the initial presentation. **Before** proceeding with any **correctional facilities/jails**, it is especially important to talk with your local H & I committee *first* to let them know what the BTG Committee is planning to do.

Before contacting a facility, your initial Presentation Team should be ready to go. Initial staff contact can be made with a letter and a follow up telephone call. The personal approach of a phone call seems to work best. If they agree to a presentation, ask them to have a VCR available to show a tape, if at all possi-

ble.

## Presentations for Facility Staff

Getting volunteers together and reading the *Bridging The Gap Staff Presentation Team Skit* (available through the area BTG) can help you become familiar with the concept of a facility staff presentation.

The team should consist of two or three members. Because we are representing Alcoholics Anonymous, it is important to be on time and pleasant. Be brief and to the point. The staff may already be familiar with A.A. Avoid being abrasive or getting involved in any type of controversy. We are simply there to inform them that Bridging The Gap is an effort to bridge the gap to A.A. in the outside world.

## Suggested Facility Presentation Format

1. Introduce yourself and inform them that you are there to explain about Alcoholics Anonymous Bridging The Gap. Hand out the brochures:

BTG	CNCA BTG "White Cards"	6 copies
B-2	12 Steps and 12 Traditions (paper)	1 copy
P-35	Problems Other Than Alcohol	6 copies
P-49	Bridging The Gap	6 copies
F-2	Information on A.A.	6 copies
P-28	Twelve Traditions Flier	6 copies
F-1	AA at a Glance	6 copies
2. Show the tape **Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous**. The staff should review it before it is shown to the patients or inmates. It can be ordered (item #VS-16) from AAWS, any Intergroup/Central Office, your local General Service Literature/Grapevine chairperson, or BTG Area Literature Chairperson.
3. Explain that you would like to come into their facility to show this tape to patients or inmates that are interested in A.A. and how A.A. members in Bridging The Gap can meet them when they are released to go to a meeting. Once they have



indicated a desire for help they would then make a Contact Request. The initial contact is the Contact Volunteer's responsibility and is made while they are still inside. This is done by personal visits, phone calls or letters, depending on circumstances. The Bridging The Gap Volunteer is responsible for calling or meeting the patient or inmate upon their release to go to an A.A. meeting. Point out that Bridging The Gap committees are located in the US and Canada for those released out of the area. Contacts have also been facilitated in other countries.

4. When talking about the Contact Request, point out that the information is needed to make contact with the patient or inmate for an outside meeting in their hometown. The information is retained until contact is made and then is destroyed.
5. Review our Traditions with particular emphasis on the **3rd and 5th traditions**. Our Traditions are based solely on past experience. When the staff is informed up front, later misunderstandings can be avoided. For example, the non-alcoholic addict should be referred to other 12 step programs as we are there only to help the ones that desire to stop drinking. The back of the CNCA Bridging The Gap "White Card" which explains briefly, what BTG is and how to request a BTG contact and the pamphlet, "Information on A.A.," (F-2) both have a list of the things A.A. does not do.
6. Open the discussion for questions. Frank, open honesty should be the guidelines for answering all questions. If you do not have an answer, admit it and promise to get back to them ASAP with an answer.
7. Committing to only one or two of the patient or inmate presentations a month in the beginning is suggested. It should be known how many presentations your system can do and respond to. If you do not have enough team members or volunteers, it is OK to say: "We can only do one presentation per month at this time". You can always ask to increase it later. **It matters that we do what we say we can.**
8. Leave your name, phone number and best time to receive

calls with them so they have a way to contact you.

9. Be sure to take notes on special procedural requirements the staff may discuss with you. If possible, type them up later so they can be given to the Presentation Teams making presentations to patients or inmates at that facility.

## Other Ways to work with Facilities

These methods for BTG Presentations have proven to be a consistent way to find those alcoholics that desire help when they are released. There are other approaches that can be tried where formal BTG Presentations may not be possible. Such as:

You may be able to make arrangements with a facility to leave a confidential Contact Card box with a display explaining Bridging The Gap. Those cards could routinely be checked and picked up once or twice a week. It is important that someone is responsible for picking up potentially filled out cards. The patients or inmates and staff may notice if stale cards are left behind.

There are many different ways to work with staff on the inside. See the "A.A. Correctional Facilities Workbook" in the "Pre-release A.A. Contact" section for more ideas along these lines.

We do not duplicate the work of the Hospital & Institutions Committee (H&I) of Alcoholics Anonymous or the Public Information/Cooperation with Professional Committees (PI/CPC). In fact, we work closely with these committees to provide service for alcoholics whose needs fall outside those committees' charters. In order to avoid misunderstandings as well as receive feedback and help from these groups, we suggest developing a relationship with these two committees.

Before proceeding with any correctional facilities, it is important to communicate with your friends at the local H&I committee. H&I and PI/CPC often have years of experience with a specific facility and its administrators, and can offer important help in this area.

In addition, it can be very helpful for the BTG chair or a designated BTG liaison to attend the local H&I meetings. It is suggested that you contact the local H&I chair and ask for a few minutes during the H&I business meeting to introduce yourself

and discuss what BTG does.

The H&I representatives who go into facilities should be asked to bring white cards with them. The reason that only white cards are provided is because many facilities where a clearance is required do not allow the H&I representatives to take anything out of the facility from inmates. The white cards may be left behind and someone may write to the Petaluma PO box to request BTG contact. Blue cards are meant to be filled out while BTG representatives are present and leave with the BTG representatives.

## Presentations for Patients or Inmates

The *Suggested BTG Facility Presentation* (pg. 20—22) is used at presentations by most facility presentation teams.

This presentation should be done in pairs, although if only one person is available, the commitment should be honored.

The number of team members for all the Presentation Teams for a facility should be a minimum of six persons, especially if doing presentations more than once a month. This of course may not be possible when first starting out. It does make it easier to handle situations like vacations or when a team member is not available. It is recommended that each team do only one presentation a month.

The purpose of this presentation is to:

- Inform patients or inmates about what A.A. Bridging The Gap is and that it is available for them when they leave the facility.
- Inform patient or inmates on how to make a “Contact Request” (which would be different for patients vs. inmates). Patients are usually allowed to supply contact information needed for the Blue Cards; however, inmates may not be allowed to do this depending on the security requirements of the facility. **Always** be aware of the requirements and expectations of any facility that you work with.

## Presentation Guidelines

Bring the **Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous** or **It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell** videotape and sufficient literature for everyone in the room in the event each person wants to request a Contact. You need to arrange for video equipment to be available should you choose to show a video.

Appearance should be neat and clean. To those inside we are representatives of Alcoholics Anonymous.

**Be on time or early.** It's easier to gather serenity in the parking lot or lobby for 15 minutes, than to undo the negative reaction of being late.

**Avoid drunk-a-logs.** The presentation is not an A.A. meeting. The H&I committee conducts A.A. meetings inside facilities.

**Be brief and to the point** without rushing through the presentation and omitting pertinent information. As guests we remember that we may be taking up some of the patients' or inmates' free time, or the facility therapy time.

Now you are ready to begin. How you start depends on what has been agreed to between the facility staff and the Bridging The Gap Committee.

**Pages 20 to 22 contain the suggested presentation format:** The 8 ½ X 11 original for making copies is available separately as part of the CNCA BTG Originals for Copying.

## Points to Remember

Keep calm control of the meeting. Excessive comments from patients or inmates may cause a person to be reluctant to request a contact, especially excessively negative comments during the Q&A period. Try to limit participation to questions only.

Be positive yet honest. Remind them that if anyone did not request a contact and they change their mind later, they can get in touch with us or talk to the staff.

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.

When we reach out to God with one hand and to the suffering alcoholic with the other, it is impossible to pick up a drink." (Reprinted with permission of AAWS)

### Suggested BTG Presentation Format

Suggested presentation text is shown in italics below.

*Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am an Alcoholic. I am here with \_\_\_\_\_ (names of the AA members with you).*

*We are members of the Bridging The Gap Committee of Alcoholics Anonymous. Bridging The Gap provides a temporary contact person to help Alcoholics make the transition from the facility to AA on the outside.*

*Our experience has taught us that one of the most slippery places in sobriety is between the doors of the facility and the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous in the community.*

*We would like to explain a little about Alcoholics Anonymous and what Bridging The Gap is all about.*

*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 causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other Alcoholics to achieve sobriety.*

*We have brought along a short video, produced by the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous.*

### Show video - "Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous" or "It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell"

*AA is open to any person who has a desire to stop drinking. If you have a problem with alcohol and drugs, and you have a desire to stop drinking, you are welcome. If you are addicted to*

*drugs and have no problem with alcohol, we suggest that you seek out a twelve-step program that deals with your drug of choice.*

*Bridging The Gap is made up of AA members that help people make the transition from hospitals and institutions to AA in their home community. Many of us either did not know how to find AA when we first started out, or were too scared to go alone. When we finally got up the courage to go we were not able to reach out to a room full of strangers and ask for help. The sole purpose of Bridging The Gap is to help you get acquainted with AA in your community.*

### To inmates:

*If you would like a helping hand, we have a white information card for you, which explains briefly, what BTG is, what AA is NOT, and tells you how to request a BTG contact.*

### To patients:

*If you would like a helping hand, we have a request card for you to complete.*

*The information you provide will be held in the strictest confidence. It will be used to find a temporary contact for you, and then the information will be destroyed. We try to match requests with volunteers based on three criteria: zip code, sex, and age.*

*Your BTG contact will get in touch with you as soon as possible. Often this will be before you leave this facility. After you return home, they will introduce you to fellow members at an AA meeting in your home community. Their commitment to you is only short term. Sometimes longer-term sponsorship develops between the newcomer and their temporary contact. Your contact will be willing to answer any AA related questions you may have.*

*Now I will turn the meeting over to \_\_\_\_\_, who will share a little about what AA has meant to him/her.*

*Does anyone have any questions? If so we will be happy to answer them.*

## Q & A period

To patients:

*These are the request cards we have been talking about. We will spend a few moments if anyone wants to fill out a card.  
(Check that cards are filled out legibly and completely.)*

*We thank you all for your time. We would like to leave some White BTG Cards with you so that you may contact us later if you wish. Thank you again.*

After the presentation, be sure to turn any Contact Requests into the Phone Coordinators promptly.

## 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 used for 12th Step work. In the spirit

expressed in Bill W.'s words above, Bridging the Gap 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.**

## Appendix :

**This appendix is largely directed to the District Chair but any committee member can benefit from reading it**

The following sections in this appendix contain information that will be helpful to you in organizing Bridging the Gap in your district. Included are a section that reflects some of our experience with Bridging the Gap, suggestions on the funding needs of your district and a sample letter that could be used when approaching facilities about presentations.

This rewarding 12th step work provides vital help for the institutionalized alcoholic who is reaching out. Experience has shown that a large percentage of alcoholics released from confinement end up drinking within a short time if they don't make it to meeting (if possible their first day out) in their own community. In addition, meeting recovering alcoholics in their community (you) will ensure their sense of being welcomed in the larger world outside the walls of their former confinement.

### About this Manual

This booklet including this appendix intended for BTG District Chairs contains information about Bridging The Gap gathered from our past experience and contributions from our friends in other areas and states.

The suggestions in this manual contain basic guidelines that have been proven to work. We hope you find them helpful so your district can avoid having to re-invent the wheel. Dealing with individual jails and treatment facilities may require different presentation procedures. You may even discover different guidelines for your district. Whatever works, great! Sharing our experiences, questions and suggestions keeps us focused on our singleness of purpose.

Our CNCA Bridging the Gap Committee is a sub-committee of the Area General Service Committee, which provides for all area committee funding, as well as additional support and help in our work. Organizing local funding for your district is described in a later section in this manual and should be considered early when setting up your district.

If all the information looks overwhelming or confusing, relax. We're not in a horse race and there is no perfect way to do it. If we remain focused on the process, and take one task at a time, we find things eventually fall into place with the help of others and our Higher Power. *We are not alone when we communicate and ask for help.*

### Sharing Our Experience

Organizing an effort such as BTG can be a challenge. If you are scratching your head at this point, you are not alone. Talking with other dis-

tricts, area committee members and officers is often helpful in finding answers to your questions. The CNCA Area Bridging The Gap meeting, which meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of each month in Petaluma (your DCMC should have more information), is where District BTG Chairpersons, Area committee members, meet to discuss such questions and share experiences.

It is crucial to follow up effectively with any facilities TO WHICH WE MAKE COMMITMENTS. Our experience has shown that working slowly and carefully is important when approaching and making commitments to facilities, as they will often prepare their staff to work with BTG members. As a result, it is important that BTG always be able to follow through with each commitment.

**What does seem to work well** is conducting a discussion with your local committee to determine what your BTG committee can and cannot do **BEFORE** approaching the facility. We suggest proceeding slowly and steadily with the facility. Inform the facility that only one or two presentations per month is possible at the start. Then continue communicating with the BTG committee and the facility to determine the next steps together.

Please remember that you represent AA to these facilities as you prepare to do this 12th step work. A slow and consistent pace builds credibility with facilities and with suffering alcoholics. Planning and communication develops unity and gets others involved.

If at times it seems like things are not moving forward, ask for help and keep trying. What we are doing **truly does** matter to the alcoholic reaching out. Talking with others can be a source of motivation.

Organizing BTG work is designed to do effective 12th step work. Progress generally occurs when we have gone out and started doing presentations at facilities, one at a time. However, Bridging the Gap happens when we actually meet a contact and go to an AA meeting with him/her.

Does our organizing and BTG committee work focus on helping us support that service? It has been said that no matter how well organized or structured an AA committee may be, the final success is always based on "one drunk talking to another." Bridging the Gap makes this possible. As we work together to put our hands into those of the newcomer, our purpose is fulfilled. Together we learn how to walk before we can run. We trust in our Higher Power to give us direction one day at a time.

*And we've also heard that it is  
OKAY to have fun in service!*

## **Other Suggestions:**

Some say as soon as we learn it, we share it. Keep training others! A good way to do this is to **bring someone along** when you are carrying out your responsibilities—they can learn how to

do it at the same time. AA is a “We” program, it can be more fun when we're not alone.

**Maintain an active** up-to-date Volunteer Phone List for the Phone Coordinator(s) to keep BTG work effective. Many facilities can be ready for us quickly and will approve routine Bridging The Gap presentations once they see it working. This, in turn, will generate more Contact Requests for your Phone Coordinator(s).

## About Funding

It is a good idea to obtain a source of funding before proceeding with BTG work that involves expenses. Your local General Service district can provide funding for your Bridging The Gap district.

When asking for funding at the local General Service meeting it is suggested that you be prepared with information on what Bridging The Gap is about and on what local funds will be used.

District BTG Chairpersons in the past have usually presented copies of a funding proposal at the District General Service meeting.

Districts may decide to reimburse you for your receipts, or may allow a monthly or yearly budget.

Typical funding needs are:

- Copying costs for items like contact request cards (Blue), volunteer cards (Yellow), thank you letters to new volunteers, and meeting

and informational fliers.

- Brochures for volunteers and presentation teams.
- Postage for thank you letters and brochures to volunteers.
- Videos used in presentations such as: **Hope - Alcoholics Anonymous** and **It Sure Beats Sitting In A Cell**.
- Telephone expenses involving alcoholics being released from or to locations outside of your town.
- Local post office box expense if needed, although most districts have not found this very helpful.
- Local telephone number expense if you decide to have one.

Our actual 12-step work must **never** be paid for. Experience has shown it is important to inform others that no funds are used for any 12-step work. Misunderstandings in the past have occurred over this issue.

Ask your District treasurer for help in accounting for how BTG funds are spent.

The amount per month asked for should be able to cover the expenses you will foresee in the near future. It is OK to return excess funds or to ask for additional funding later. The funds will only be used for Bridging The Gap work concerning the district.

You may be asked about funds already provided by

the CNCA General Service Area Committee for the Bridging The Gap Area Committee work. Those funds were not intended nor could they cover the requirements for each of the 22 districts in our area.

### **Sample Facility Staff Letter**

The following is suggested text to use in your letter to the facility staff:

Dear Recovery Center/Correctional Facility Administrator,

We would like to introduce you to Bridging The Gap, a part of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The purpose of Bridging The Gap is to help newly released alcoholics "Bridge the Gap" to AA recovery

meetings outside your facility by going with them to their first meeting in their home community. Our volunteers are members of AA responding to those that would request such service.

I have enclosed some information about AA and Bridging The Gap.

If you are interested, we can meet with you to discuss AA Bridging The Gap in more detail. We will be calling you shortly.

Alcoholics Anonymous is not affiliated with any other organization or institution.  
I can be reached at \_\_\_\_\_ (telephone number and best time to call or your local district address).  
(Optional)

Thank you for your consideration.  
Sincerely yours,

J. Doe  
Bridging The Gap Representative  
Enclosures: *Bridging The Gap* and *Information on AA Pamphlets*.

*[And remember to make a follow-up call!]*



To Contact the California Northern Coastal Area Bridging the Gap Committee:

E-mail the BTG Chair through the CNCA06.org website: 1<sup>st</sup> click on the **Contact Us** tab, then use the drop-down under **Department** to select Bridging the Gap

Or write to: P.O. Box 750623  
Petaluma CA  
94975-0623

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Bridging The Gap Committee

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