

**SOBER & FREE CONFERENCE CHARTER**  
**SOBER & FREE CONFERENCE**  
**San Jose, California**

**DEFINITION**

Sober & Free is a conference sponsored by the Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender members (LGBT) of San Jose Alcoholics Anonymous, with Al-Anon participation. The Charter is not a legal instrument, but practically speaking, it is the primary guideline for the Sober & Free Conference, hereafter referred to as the Conference.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Conference is to carry the message of recovery from alcoholism as explained in the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" and other General Service Conference approved literature.

**DIRECTION**

The Conference is guided by the principles of the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of World Service of Alcoholics Anonymous. The Conference will also use the "A.A. Guidelines for Conferences and Conventions."

**DESCRIPTIONS**

The SOBER & FREE CONFERENCE STEERING COMMITTEE, hereafter referred to as the Steering Committee, will consist of members elected at an open election event sponsored by the Sober & Free Advisory Committee (see section titled "Sober & Free Advisory Committee"), hereafter referred to as the Advisory Committee. Service on any conference committee shall not be paid. All committee members must be 'clean and sober' members of A.A. with the exception of the Al-Anon Committee, which will be composed of Al-Anon members selected by LGBT Al-Anon (see section titled "Al-Anon").

**STEERING COMMITTEE** –The Steering Committee serves as the planning, facilitating and coordinating body for the Conference. The role of the Steering Committee is to make decisions regarding the conference location, date, theme (from conference approved literature) and budget, prepare a preliminary fund-raising schedule sufficient to meet the budget, and recruit and work with individuals as required to ensure successful completion of the tasks required to put on the conference.

Members of the Steering Committee will be selected in an open election event held by the Sober & Free Advisory Committee, which will be held within 90 days of the close of the Conference each year.

The Steering Committee and minimum lengths of continuous sobriety shall be:

- One (1) Conference Chair 5 years
- One (1) Conference Vice-Chair 4 years
- One (1) Treasurer 3 years
- One (1) Secretary 2 years
- One (1) Communications Chair 3 years
- One (1) Al-Anon Chair

Candidates must meet the minimum sobriety requirements at the time of the election to be eligible for consideration for Conference Steering Committee positions. Waiving sobriety requirements is not in the best interest of the individual or the conference, and therefore will **not** be entertained at the election.

## **FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**(1) CONFERENCE CHAIR:** Sobriety requirement is minimum 5 years of continuous sobriety. Chair should have good organizational skills, and enjoy and be able to work well with others.

The Conference Chair shall be the voice of the Conference between Steering Committee Meetings. In matters covered by the Charter, he/she has authority to act. He/she has the responsibility and authority to request action from committee members who are in turn responsible to the Conference. His/her decisions, spelled out by the Charter or approved by the Conference Steering Committee, are binding. While the Conference Chair is entrusted with the “Right of Decision”, to the extent possible, decisions should reflect the **group conscience** of the Steering Committee.

The Conference Chair shall be available to the Advisory Committee, Secretary, Treasurer, Communications Chair, and all committee members, and will provide assistance as needed. He/she is responsible to convene and conduct Steering Committee meetings in an orderly fashion and will provide a written agenda to all committee members at least 1 week prior to the meeting. He/she will serve as a member of the Advisory Committee and will attend all Advisory Committee meetings, providing quarterly progress reports, including budgets, to the Advisory Committee.

The Conference Chair will review the Conference budget and make recommendations concerning proposed expenses. The Conference Chair shall have the responsibility for the final approval of all budgets, co-sign checks and approve disbursement of funds for all Conference related expenses with the advice of the Steering Committee.

The Conference Chair is also responsible for overseeing the following conference responsibilities:

**SPEAKERS AND WORKSHOPS:** Responsibilities include seeking AA speakers, creating the schedule/program, creating the workshop topics, selecting workshop and meeting leaders, and designing and arranging for printing of the conference program.

**MAIN SPEAKERS:** LGBTAA speakers shall have a minimum sobriety requirement of FIVE (5) years. Conference Chair to procure recorded samples of proposed Main Speakers. If local, Conference Chair to make arrangements to hear proposed individual(s). Steering Committee should review recorded samples and/or attend speaker's presentation. Steering Committee group consensus should be use in selection of Main Speakers.

Main Speakers are to be reminded of our Singleness of Purpose. It is the Conference Chair's responsibility to ensure Speaker Agreement Letter is sent to selected Main Speakers. (See Addendum 1) Speaker Agreement Letter.)

Reasonable expenses for travel, lodging (as appropriate for out-of-area speakers) and conference registration for AA Main Speakers shall be paid by the conference from the Speakers and Workshop budget. Meals, miscellaneous personal expenses, and rental cars will not be reimbursed to AA speakers by the conference. Every effort will be made to ensure gender parity and equal female/male representation each year.

**WORKSHOPS:** It is suggested that individuals have a minimum of TWO (2) years for workshop leaders, and ONE (1) year for leaders of on-going meetings. Every effort will be made to ensure there are both female and male co-leaders assigned for each workshop.

Conference workshop topics, the overall conference schedule, and the conference program will be presented to the Steering Committee for concurrence. Expenses incurred for Speakers and Workshops will be within approved Speakers and Workshops budget

**CONFERENCE ENTERTAINMENT:** Arrange for the entertainment activities during the conference. Such activities could include, but are not limited to, a dance, a variety show, a play, a musical, or a comedic act. Subject matter for performances should express recovery in A.A. and be suitable for a mixed audience of all ages. Expenses incurred for entertainment will be within approved Entertainment Committee budget.

The Conference Chair and Vice-Chair will be jointly responsible for the following Conference functions:

**FUNDRAISING:** Coordinate activities to raise moneys to support the conference. Suggested activities may include, but are not limited to: dances, cake sales, bingo, bowling, picnics, auctions, theatre parties, outings, karaoke events, or catered dinners. Fundraising should not be directed at the general public in accordance with Tradition 7: "Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." Expenses incurred for Fundraising will be within approved Fundraising budget.

COMMEMORATIVE ITEMS; Seek out vendors in an effort to obtain appropriate items to commemorate the conference. Such items must be presented to the Steering Committee for consideration and approval. Recommend prices for such items for approval by the Steering Committee and have such items available in a timely manner for sale. Expenses incurred for Commemorative Items will be within approved Commemorative Items budget.

**(2) CONFERENCE VICE-CHAIR:** Sobriety requirement is minimum 4 years of continuous sobriety. Vice-Chair should have good organizational skills and enjoy and be able to work well with others.

The Vice-Chair is encouraged and has the option to move into the position of Chair for the following year's conference. The Vice-Chair will notify the Advisory Committee 90 days in advance of the Sober & Free Conference of their intent to serve as Chair for the following year. If they make themselves available, the Advisory Committee will not pursue other volunteers for the position unless there is concern that the Vice-Chair would not be able to serve appropriately.

The Vice-Chair is also responsible for overseeing the following Conference responsibilities:

**AL-ANON INTERFACE:** The Vice-Chair will initiate contact, invite, and encourage Al-Anon participation in the Conference.

**INTERIOR DESIGN:** Decorate the conference site with banners, flowers, signs, balloons, or other items as appropriate, keeping within the guidelines of the landlord.

**BANNER:** Each year a new banner with the logo design is created (See Publicity). The size of the banner shall be 3 feet high x 4 feet wide (36" x 48"), using materials consistent with past banners.(See addendum 2, Banner Ordering Information) The banner design is to contain "Sober &Free", the year of the conference, and the AA "Circle with Triangle" somewhere within the design. Expenses incurred for Interior Design will be within approved Interior Design budget.

**HOSPITALITY AND SPECIAL NEEDS:** Create an environment to welcome those attending the Conference. Coordinate the set-up of all meeting rooms and hospitality/social areas in conjunction with the landlords of the conference site. Assist those attending the conference who are in need of housing, childcare, and other special needs. The conference will attempt to meet the needs of the mobility challenged persons of our community. Expenses incurred for Hospitality and Special Needs will be within approved Hospitality and Special Needs budget.

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**FUNDRAISING:** Coordinate activities to raise moneys to support the conference. Suggested activities may include, but are not limited to: dances, cake sales, bingo, bowling, picnics, auctions, theatre parties, outings, karaoke events, or catered dinners. Fundraising should not be directed at the general public in accordance with Tradition 7: "Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." Expenses incurred for Fundraising will be within approved Fundraising budget.

**COMMEMORATIVE ITEMS;** Seek out vendors in an effort to obtain appropriate items to commemorate the conference. Such items must be presented to the Steering Committee for consideration and approval. Recommend prices for such items for approval by the Steering Committee and have such items available in a timely manner for sale. Expenses incurred for Commemorative Items will be within approved Commemorative Items budget.

**(3) TREASURER:** Sobriety requirement is minimum 3 years of continuous sobriety. Treasurer should also have some experience with maintaining a checking account, and using Excel or similar financial spreadsheet software.

The treasurer will maintain the financial records of the conference treasury, assist in the development of the budget for the conference, and provide a written itemized financial statement at each Steering Committee meeting. He/she will be responsible for maintaining records for the bank account(s), reconciling and accounting for all funds in the bank accounts(s), and making all bank deposits and payments on a timely basis. All expenditures from any Sober & Free account must have two (2) signatures: the treasurer's and either the Chair or Vice-Chair.

**REGISTRATION:** Design the registration form and present it to the Steering Committee for approval. Process registrations as they are received; produce nametags for the registrations; staff the registration table at the conference; compile statistics on conference attendance. The Registration Committee shall maintain a mailing list. Such list shall be kept confidential and used for Sober & Free Conference purposes only. Expenses incurred for Registration will be within approved Registration budget.

**(4) SECRETARY:** Sobriety requirement is minimum 2 years of continuous sobriety. The secretary will attend all Steering Committee meetings, record the minutes during the meetings, and provide written minutes of the prior Steering Committee meeting for committee approval. He/she will have a working knowledge of the Sober and Free Conference Charter and be ready to verify actions of past meetings.

The Secretary is also responsible for overseeing the following conference responsibilities:

**ARCHIVES:** Attend all fundraising and conference activities to collect and maintain historical records, mementos (ex: event flyers, tickets, photographs, etc.) and minutes of the activities leading up to and including the conference, and create a scrapbook/album of these materials for display at the conference. Put up sign at all fundraisers letting people know that photographs may be taken at the event and to let the Archivist or people selling event tickets know if they

don't want their picture taken. Expenses incurred for Archives will be within approved Archives budget.

**LITERATURE:** Make available A.A. Conference Approved Literature during the Conference. Books, tapes, etc. sold by the conference shall be sold at cost. Pamphlets are to be free to those attending the conference; the cost of such pamphlets will be paid by the conference. Subscriptions for the Grapevine and Box 459 are to be available for conference attendees. Expenses incurred for Literature will be within approved Literature budget.

**REGISTRATION:** Leading up to the conference weekend, the Secretary will assist the Treasurer in duties related to registration.

**(5) COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR:** Sobriety requirement is minimum 3 years of continuous sobriety. The Communications Chair will maintain the Sober & Free web site throughout the conference year. Therefore, this person should have basic knowledge of how to edit HTML or basic knowledge of how to use *Dreamweaver* or other webpage design programs. The website template cannot be changed without the prior approval of The Advisory Committee. He/she is responsible for notifying the International Advisory Council for Homosexual Men and Women in Alcoholics Anonymous ([www.IAC-AA.org](http://www.IAC-AA.org)) of our conference dates and providing an updated list of the local Gay and Lesbian meetings to the [www.IAC-AA.org](http://www.IAC-AA.org) website annually. In addition, the Communications Chair will make lists of hotels, motels and restaurants in the conference area and a map showing the location of the conference available on the website for conference attendees. Expenses incurred by the Communications Chair will be within approved Communications Chair budget.

The Sober & Free web site is to be used for the purpose of publicizing events and information relating to the conference, including dates, times, and locations of the conference and fundraisers. The web site is the property of Sober & Free. Communications Chair shall have responsibility of ensuring that the subject matter contained in the web site falls within the guidelines of the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Communications Chair is also responsible for overseeing the following Conference responsibilities:

**PUBLICITY:** Publicize the conference. Conduct a Logo/Banner Design "Contest" or simply request submission of logo/banner design ideas from our community at the beginning of the Conference year. The logo/banner design is used for commemorative items and as a unique graphic symbol representing that year's event. The only stipulation is that the banner design contain the words "Sober &Free", the year of the conference, and the AA "Circle with Triangle" somewhere within the design (see Interior Design: Banner, and Addendum 2, Banner and Ordering Information). Logo/banner design submissions must be in .pdf formats and include PMS colors. Produce and distribute newsletters, flyers and announcements to inform the community of the conference and all activities as appropriate leading to the event. Inform agencies, such as the Grapevine, Box 459 and appropriate Intergroup offices 4 months in advance of the conference. Contact individuals to carry the message, personally, to as many

meetings as possible in and out of the area. Expenses incurred for Publicity will be within approved Publicity budget.

**(6) AL-ANON:** The purpose of Al-Anon participation in the conference is to carry the message of recovery from the effects of the family disease of alcoholism, as explained in Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature. As invited guests, the lesbian and gay Al-Anon members coordinate Al-Anon activities in conjunction with the Steering Committee.

A member determined by an Al-Anon Committee will serve as a single point of contact for the Conference, and will participate on the Steering Committee; Al-Anon is not a voting member of the Steering Committee. In the event there is insufficient Al-Anon interest in the Sober & Free Conference, Al-Anon participation in the Conference will not be present.

The Al-Anon Committee selects the Al-Anon speakers, creates the Al-Anon workshop topics, and selects their own workshop and meeting leaders. Al-Anon workshop topics will be presented to the Steering Committee for concurrence and inclusion in the conference program. Reimbursement for Al-Anon speaker expenses shall be at the discretion of the Steering Committee. The Al-Anon Committee will ensure Al-Anon literature is available at the conference, disperse any Al-Anon 7th Tradition collections, and participate in and support of all the conference activities – including the year round fund raising events for the Conference. Al-Anon participation is bound by the principles of the 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts of Service of Al-Anon.

## REGISTRATION AND REGISTRATION FEES

Why is there a Registration Fee?

One of the most common misconceptions about recovery conferences and conventions is that they are AA meetings and since "there are no dues or fees for AA membership..." some say there should be no dues or fees to attend a roundup either. San Jose Sober & Free incurs several basic necessary expenses to organize the convention. We incur charges to use the facilities and rent meeting/fundraising space. We also incur charges for postage, printing, entertainment, as well as the necessary expense of covering our main speakers' travel and lodging expenses. These are just a few of the expenses San Jose Sober & Free is responsible for. The goal for the committee is to break even and perhaps even put some money into a prudent reserve for a year when attendance may be low. Therefore, San Jose Sober & Free does charge a nominal registration fee. It is important to remember that as responsible members in recovery, we "pay our own way."

It is highly recommended that the above "Question/Answer" is always incorporated into the Sober & Free Web site, and should also be available at the registration table during the conference.

Based on proposed conference expenses and fund raising budgets, each Steering Committee/conference year is responsible for determining a "nominal registration fee" for attendance at the conference and to cover those expenses not accounted for in the conference fund raising budget/activities.

Additionally, each Steering Committee/conference year may determine a "nominal fee" for attending only one day of the conference, or only the Friday or Saturday evening events.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

We understand that some members wishing to attend our conference have limited funds, especially in early sobriety. Although we do not support the concept that "no one will be turned away for lack of funds" (see Registration Fee, above), we do want to make it possible for all who want to attend to do so. Sober & Free makes a set number of "Scholarships" (all event access) available to those with limited funds who have asked for such support. In accordance with our 7th Tradition of being "self-supporting", Scholarship applicants are requested to make at least a partial donation if they cannot afford to pay the entire registration fee. We also request that applicants volunteer to station/man one of the Conference Desks (Information, Registration, Literature, Achieves, etc.) for approximately two hours during the Conference as a means of contributing. Applicants receiving Scholarships will be at the discretion of the Conference Chair and Treasurer.

Each Steering Committee/conference year will determine the number of Scholarships to be available. The Treasurer will make recommendation to the Steering Committee if the Registration Form should be used as the vehicle for both requesting Scholarship Fund contributions and advising attendees of the Scholarship policy.



At the discretion of the Conference Chair and Treasurer, those who have requested a Scholarship prior to the actual conference date, may contribute their volunteer time at several of the pre-conference fund raising activities.

## **SOBER & FREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The Advisory Committee serves as the general policy setting body for the conference. It is not the role of the advisory committee to run the conference, but rather to set guiding principles for the conference and ensure the conference is run according to the principles outlined in the Charter.

### **FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

1. Members of the Advisory Committee are responsible for conducting a search to find people who are qualified to serve as members of the Steering Committee, approach these individuals and discuss the positions(s), duties, and commitment required, inquire as to if the individuals would make themselves available for the position(s), and if they are, have the person attend the open election event. In the spirit of the AA Traditions, it is suggested that no person on the Steering Committee serve in the same role TWO years in a row.
2. The Advisory Committee will propose and Advisory Committee Chairperson will host an open election event within 90 days of the conference for the purpose of forming the Steering Committee for the year's Sober & Free Conference.
3. In the event a position on the Steering Committee becomes available after the open election event, the Steering Committee will notify the Advisory Committee, which will assist in filling the position.
4. The Advisory Committee will meet regularly, with one of the meetings being held within 30 days of the close of the conference to discuss and plan the open election that will be held directly after the conference.
5. The Advisory Committee meetings will be open for anyone to attend; only Advisory Committee members will vote on items brought before the Committee.
6. The Advisory Committee will insure that there is an orderly transition of material, moneys and information from one conference to the next. They are responsible for all carryover business (e.g., annual renewal fees, mailbox, website, bank account, storage locker, etc). The Advisory Committee will review the financial standing of the previous year's conference and approve the next year's budget yearly in September.
7. Decisions of the Advisory Committee will be by a simple majority of members present.
8. The Advisory Committee is responsible for review and revisions to the Sober and Free Charter and acts as an oversight body to ensure conference guidelines as stated in the Charter are maintained.

**PRUDENT RESERVE:** The Sober & Free Conference is fully self supporting through its own contributions. The Advisory Committee establishes a prudent reserve to ensure sufficient funds are available to provide the resources to hold a Conference. The amount of the prudent reserve is established using the previous year's total conference cost as a guide. Currently, the prudent reserve is 80% of the average of the previous two (2) years total conference expenses..

Funds withdrawn from the prudent reserve are provided as seed money for the future year conference to pay for upfront costs prior to, or as a supplement to, any fundraising funds. Funds

borrowed are to be repaid to the prudent reserve by the end of the conference. Any request for funds from the prudent reserve to reimburse expenses that will not be met by a Conference's own fundraising must be approved by the Advisory Committee. To maintain funding of the prudent reserve, the Advisory Committee shall suggest to each Conference Chair at the beginning of their term, a prudent reserve "contribution goal" to be included as part of their Conference fundraising goal. The current recommended "contribution goal" is \$1,000.

The membership of the Advisory Committee is as follows:

- One (1) Current year's conference Chair
- One (1) Chair from the prior year's conference
- Past Conference Chairs willing and available to serve

### **PROCEDURES TO AMEND THE CHARTER**

Proposals to amend the Charter may be submitted by any member of the gay and lesbian San Jose A.A. community. The proposal must be in writing and submitted to the Conference Advisory Committee FOUR (4) weeks prior to the Advisory Committee meeting. The Advisory Committee will place the proposal on the meeting's agenda or call a special meeting. A simple majority vote of the Advisory Committee members present is required to pass the amendment, and it will become effective upon passage.

The Conference Advisory Committee may amend and make changes as needed to clarify or further define sections of the Charter during Conference Advisory Committee meetings. A simple majority vote of the Advisory Committee members present is required. The Charter will then be updated and posted to the web site, ensuring a "revision date" is included in the footer of each page.

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Addendum 1

Dear (INSERT SPEAKER'S NAME):

Thank you for agreeing to speak at **(insert YEAR) Sober & Free**. I have enclosed a schedule and workshop listings for your information. Our website ([www.soberandfree.org](http://www.soberandfree.org)) has even more info. Our Conference is being held at the San Jose Hilton (insert DATE); all main speaker meetings will be in the Almaden Ballroom on the 1st floor, and all Saturday's day sessions will be on the 2nd floor.

Since this is an AA conference, we do request that you respect our 'singleness of purpose' and confine your share to your problems with alcohol. We also ask that if you read from the podium to please utilize AA Conference Approved Literature. In sharing your experience, strength, and hope, we also hope you could incorporate our theme (insert CONFERENCE THEME) into your remarks.

To welcome you to San Jose and to give you the opportunity to meet the Steering Committee and all our speakers, we invite you to join us for a private dinner on Friday, (Insert DATE). We will meet in the Hotel (Insert room and time). If you require a vegetarian meal please let us know so we can inform the hotel. Since we do not host any meals at our conference, we wanted to have the chance to treat you to dinner.

Your room reservation has been made at the San Jose Hilton in your name and will be paid by the Conference. Personal incidentals are at your own expense. You are already registered for the conference and we are excited that you will be with us all weekend. Arrangements will be made with you directly for airport transit. Should you have any questions please feel free to contact me or our Speakers Chairperson: (Insert name and email)

On behalf of the entire San Jose fellowship, thank you for joining us. We are excited to have you speak and helping us make Sober & Free (insert YEAR) a great conference.

In service,

(Insert name of chair)  
Chair  
(INSERT CONTACT INFO)

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Addendum 2

Banner and Ordering Information

Banners have been made at KINKOS

Request an INDOOR BANNER (INDOOR VINYL)

It is a semi-shiny material

Be aware that the material easily creases, and that crease **is** permanent

Required Size:

3 feet (36") in height

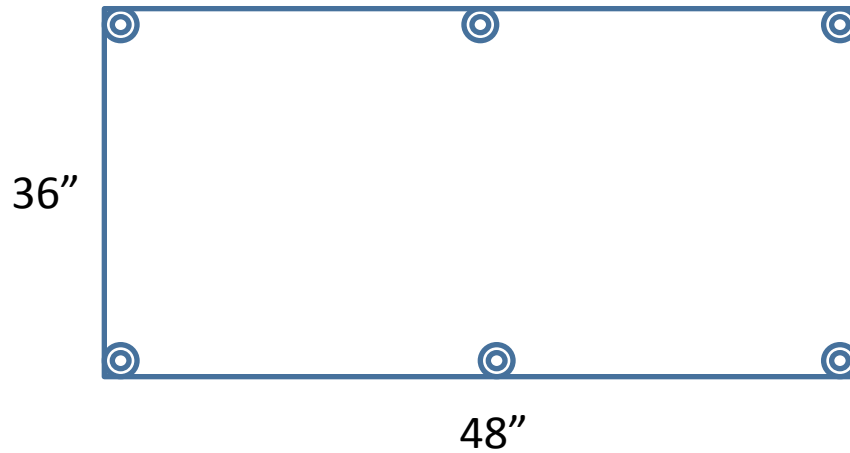
4 feet (48") in width

LANDSCAPE ORIENTATION (as below)

Six (6) grommets need to be added to finished banner:

3 on the top, at the corners and center

3 on the bottom, at the corners and center



The design given to KINKOS to create the banner must be in a **.pdf format** and include PMS colors

The only stipulation in each year's banner/logo is that the design must contain the words "Sober & Free", the year of the conference, and the AA "Circle with Triangle" symbol.

