



PUBLIC INFORMATION/PROFESSIONAL OUTREACH (PI/PO) COMMITTEE MEMBER

Requirements: 6 months abstinence for presenters and info table staff (must be at or near a healthy weight); other roles on this committee do not have an abstinence requirement.

Term: 2 year commitment.

- Work with the PI/PO Coordinator and other committee members to assist with outreach out to the public/professionals to organize events and to speak before groups (in person or online).
- Your ideas, personal contacts, and support are sought to bring OA to the still suffering compulsive overeater – meet 1x per month online for 1 hour (even if you don't have time to join the committee, your ideas and any key contact information that you may have to share is always welcome).
- For further information or to volunteer, please send email to the PI/PO Coordinator at publicinformation@oasv.org.

WHY IS PUBLIC INFORMATION IMPORTANT?

The goal of OA public information is to carry our message of recovery to the compulsive eater who still suffers. People need to know Overeaters Anonymous exists as a Twelve Step program of recovery! OA is not anonymous. Mindful that OA is a program of attraction, not promotion, we attract newcomers to OA when we inform the general public about our program and tell professionals and others who work with compulsive eaters about OA. OA's [Public Information Service Manual](#) and [Professional Outreach Manual](#) (both available for order from bookstore.oa.org) are invaluable "how-to" aids, packed full of ideas.

In addition to carrying the message one-on-one as outlined in Step Twelve, we need to inform the public about our existence and where to find our meetings, as well as where to find us on the Web or reach us by phone. There are many public information channels: newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, podcasts, websites, and phone directories. Posting on bulletin boards in public places, such as stores, libraries, gyms, and colleges is an easy way to inform the public. Some service bodies have purchased billboard space or spots on diner placemats. Some have held public information nights. We can also participate in community health fairs and make sure we're listed on local hotlines.

Perhaps one of the most important things we can do is provide information to health care professionals in our communities: doctors, nurses, counselors, social workers, nutritionists, and others who may refer people to us. We can sometimes furnish speakers to civic groups or community service organizations. All these things can be done within the scope of our Traditions while maintaining anonymity at the public media level.

Many of these activities are coordinated by the intergroup/service board, but require the participation of every group to be successful. It is often individual members putting up the bulletin board meeting notices, taking OA literature to their counselors, or leaving old copies of Lifeline in their doctors' offices that makes a difference.

HOW DO NEWCOMERS GET HELP?

Compulsive overeaters who are still suffering cannot be helped by OA unless they know the Fellowship exists and where to find it. So it is a good idea for a group to print announcements of its name, its meeting place and time, and a telephone contact. These notices can be given to hospitals or clinics, doctors, clergy and churches, social and health agencies, and business firms in the community.

Attraction Sticky Notes and the New Prospect Card, available from bookstore.oa.org, may be placed on bulletin boards in supermarkets and other places.

In areas with an intergroup or a service board, the meeting hours of all groups can be used, along with the intergroup/service board address and telephone number.

In addition to the notices, it is a good idea to distribute the public information flyer About OA, as well as the pamphlets A Program of Recovery, To the Newcomer, and Is Food a Problem for You? (These three pamphlets contain OA's Fifteen Questions.)

WHEN IS “BREAKING MY ANONYMITY” NOT AN ANONYMITY BREAK?

When you tell your story to a newcomer who has asked for OA help, that certainly is not an anonymity break. When you stand before OA groups and say, “My name is _____, and I am a compulsive eater,” that is not breaking your anonymity. Certainly when you explain your mission in taking Step Nine, you may reveal your OA membership.

But getting your full name and/or picture with your OA story printed or broadcast is not consistent with Traditions Eleven and Twelve.

Difficult borderline cases sometimes arise; each one is different. OA makes no judgments of right or wrong in questionable cases. Experience, however, suggests the following guidelines:

- The word “anonymous” in our name implies a promise of privacy. To those compulsive eaters who feel ashamed and guilty and who are afraid friends, family, or employers will criticize, we say, “Welcome. We understand, because we have gone the same route. We’ll try to help, and we promise you the haven of anonymity.”
- By keeping strict anonymity at the public level for ourselves and everyone else in OA, we prove our commitment to the humbling Principles of Traditions Eleven and Twelve. For press, radio, TV, films, and other public media of communication, we never reveal last names or any other identifying facts about any OA member. In notices to be posted on OA bulletin boards or printed in OA programs that the general public might see and on OA-related websites, we omit last names and identifying titles of all members. Television shows and news photographs obscure members’ faces or use rear views. We are identified only by our first names and last initials in newspapers or magazine articles.
- Within OA itself, we may freely exchange our full names. The Traditions specify protecting anonymity at the public level. We maintain address books of OA names, telephone numbers, and/or email addresses so we can keep in touch with and help each other. Imagine a member being hospitalized and OA friends not being able to call or visit because they know only a first name!
- In personal, private, face-to-face relationships with non-OA members, we may feel free to say we are compulsive overeaters and members of OA. These people may later refer others needing help to us. Our Tradition of public anonymity is not broken when we tell the facts about

ourselves privately. Passing on our experience, strength, and hope to other compulsive eaters is too important to let any fear or stigma stand in our way. If Rozanne, our OA founder, had kept the message to herself, where would we compulsive eaters be? In Alcoholics Anonymous, if Bill W. or Dr. Bob had said, “People wouldn’t understand” and hadn’t passed on their message, where would we all be?

- We do not hide our membership in OA out of fear and shame. That would actually strengthen the stigma of our disease. We remain anonymous in public for two primary reasons: our promise of privacy to the still-suffering compulsive eater and the spiritual rewards of humility.
- With anonymity, we sacrifice personal pride in our OA recovery, working for and placing the emphasis on our Higher Power, which in reality is responsible for our healing.
- It is not a break of anonymity to enlist Twelfth Step help for members in need of support by, for example, suggesting that other members give a member in need a call, provided we are careful to refrain from discussing any specific personal information. Many members share in their stories how a phone call from a caring member brought them back to meetings.
- Open meetings are open to all. Anything at an open meeting may be subject to scrutiny, discussion, and outside study. One should be prudent concerning what is shared at an open meeting. Our Traditions exist to protect our anonymity. The group may choose to remind newcomers and visitors to respect the anonymity of all who are present. All compulsive eaters are welcome at closed meetings, but non-compulsive eaters may attend only by special invitation based on a group conscience. We may find it best to share intimate information one-on-one with our OA sponsor or a close OA friend.

DOES OA HAVE A POLICY FOR HOW TO USE PUBLIC & SOCIAL MEDIA?

Delegates to the 2019 World Service Business Conference, representing the group conscience of worldwide Fellowship, adopted the following policy:

Statement on Public and Social Media

While Overeaters Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues, including social media, the delegates of the 2019 World Service Business Conference recommend that any OA member, group, or service body using social media for OA public information and public awareness maintain the personal anonymity of OA members. Members of Overeaters Anonymous are anonymous. the Fellowship is not.

Members of Overeaters Anonymous are responsible for maintaining their anonymity and respecting the anonymity of other OA members. When attending an OA meeting, whether face-to-face or virtual, members are encouraged to seek appropriate means to protect their own anonymity and that of fellow members.

All registered virtual meetings shall inform members that their anonymity is not fully protected when attending a virtual meeting.

Find options for protecting anonymity at [Guidelines for Anonymity in the Digital World](https://oa.org/groupsservice-bodies/guidelines/) (https://oa.org/groupsservice-bodies/guidelines/) (Business Conference Policy Manual, 2011a [amended 2016 and 2019]).

Reprinted from [*OA Handbook for Members, Groups, and Service Bodies: Recovery Opportunities*](#)