

THE MESSAGE

Boulder County Intergroup | www.bouldercountyaa.org

Serving the Alcoholics Anonymous Community of Boulder County

5401 Western Ave. Suite D, Boulder, CO 80301 303-447-8201

What is Intergroup?

An Intergroup or Central Office is a vital service that represents a partnership among local AA groups...

The office exists to aid the groups in carrying out the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Intergroup Board

Robin S - President

Michael G - Chair

Andy - Secretary

Deb - Treasurer

Karen - Central Office Manager

Carly - Member-at-large

Committee Chairs

Jon/Jacqueline - Bridge the Gap

Mikael - Daytime Phone coordinator

OPEN - Outreach

Liza/Heather - The Message

Sam N - Nightwatch

OPEN - 12-Step List

Tom - Central Office Volunteer Coordinator

Mark/Kevin - Web Admin

Please consider volunteering for one of the open committee chair positions.

The Importance of the Traditions

Over the years, I have been asked to moderate quite a few group inventories. The guidelines for this process can be found in *The AA Group* pamphlet published by AA World Service. This pamphlet asks questions about how well the group is serving the community and the alcoholic who still suffers; if a group is healthy, self-evaluation of this kind can provide guidance and purpose and boost the group's efforts toward our primary purpose as described in Tradition Five.

But often groups decide they need an inventory because of discord and tension among group members. I haven't come across a group that is in this kind of crisis because they can't decide how best to serve the alcoholic who still suffers. So I have learned to bring along a copy of the Traditions checklist that was originally published in *The Grapevine* between 1969 and 1971.

The Traditions hold AA together—we all assume that AA will be there for us, but this will be true only if we don't take the fabric that has held us together for granted. There have been societies that helped alcoholics in the past, but they fell apart because of so many of the things that the Traditions guard against. If your group or its members are experiencing any of the following, it might be helpful to look at the Traditions.

People aren't given time and respect to voice their opinions. Group consensus is rushed. Decisions are pushed through without time to think or discuss. Individuals feel ostracized or silenced. Group members don't speak up if they see this happening. The group is giving money to outside entities. Group members act as governors. People are shamed for naming their cross-addiction. Officers self-determine their roles rather than follow the group's desires.

The Traditions have allowed AA to last as long as it has, and they are vital to our continued ability to help others that our groups reflect our spiritual lives. We look to the Traditions as a way to stay that way.

Step Five

Connection to others and the “tormenting ghosts of yesterday”

“AA experience has taught us we cannot live alone with our pressing problems and the character defects which cause or aggravate them.” (12x12 p. 55)

There are two factors in the lives of almost all recovering alcoholics that drive much of our experience. The first is a desire for closeness and trusting friendships with others. Under behaviors like bravado, or shyness, or a tendency to be aloof in situations, is really the strong desire to be heard, and understood, loved and appreciated despite our imperfections and failures. We deeply long for it, and most of us experience loneliness as a result of not feeling connected to others. A second experience we mostly share is an absolute fear of being vulnerable enough to allow the connection we crave. Life has been disappointing, and people have proven themselves to be untrustworthy and the source of betrayal (real or imagined). These two great forces are completely at odds with each other and fear usually overrules any willingness to be vulnerable enough to actually experience the connection we are craving. As the quotation above says, we, as alcoholics, can't successfully keep our problems to ourselves. The isolation that being alone with our thoughts brings on can easily push us toward finding relief, often in the form of the bottle, as a way to dull it. Or at least that is our experience before we successfully get through our Fifth Step.

The chapter on Step Five in the 12x12 goes on to say, “If we have swept the searchlight of Step Four back and fourth over our careers, and it has revealed in stark relief those experiences we'd rather not remember, if we have come to know how wrong thinking and action have hurt us and others, then the need to quit living by ourselves with those tormenting ghosts of yesterday gets more urgent than ever. We have to talk to somebody about them.” (p. 55) It is the very thing that keeps us from revealing ourselves to others that also relieves us of the pain of isolation. The fear of honestly showing what we believe to be our ugliest and most unlovable parts—proof that we can't ever have the connection we so desire—keeps us precarious in our sobriety. It is telling someone anyway, despite our fear, that cures the conviction that we are so far gone that we are bound to face rejection. Of course we must be careful about whom we choose to tell, but if that person has had the experience themselves of overcoming their fear and facing the safety found through being completely open and honest, then they should be a good candidate, and they will know how that experience has transformed their life for the better. It's important to take seriously the idea that isolation with our “tormenting ghosts” can, and likely will, drive us back to seek oblivion. Only the spiritual transformation of unburdening ourselves to another person can break the experience of isolation that has haunted us.

Founders Day Speaker Meeting
and Potluck BBQ

Saturday, June 9th 2018

10:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

Roosevelt Park, Longmont

At the stone shelter at the corner of
Longs Peak Ave and Bross St

10 AM - 12 PM Fellowship and Fun

12 PM - 2 PM BBQ and Potluck

2PM - 3 PM - Sobriety Countdown and

Speaker Meeting - **Joe F from Loveland**

3 PM - 4PM - Closing and Cleanup

Burgers, veggie burgers and Hot Dogs provided

Please bring a chair and a side dish or dessert to share

Contact Craig A for more information
303-709-7831

"I knew I needed the alcoholic as much as he needed me ... And this mutual give-and-take is at the very heart of all of AA's Twelfth Step work today. This was how to carry the message. The final missing link was located right there in my first talk with Dr. Bob." - Bill W



For More Information Contact:

Craig A
District 34 Alternate DCM
303-709-7831

NEW WOMEN'S MEETING:

Serenity Sisters

Tuesdays 5:30-6:30pm

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
3700 Baseline Ave.
(Open discussion)

June Intergroup Meeting

Ask your group's IGR to attend!

**Tuesday, June 26
7:00 pm**

**SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS
LOOKOUT & 71ST
GUNBARRELL**

The Central Office has not moved!

For the foreseeable future, we are staying at our location of 5401 Western Ave. Suite D, Boulder, CO 80301

If you attend meetings at the NEW BOULDER ONE LOCATION of
5717 ARAPAHOE AVE #215, we hope you make the extra effort to continue to support your CENTRAL OFFICE and
INTERGROUP by purchasing literature and chips from us.

**CENTRAL OFFICE is in NEED of volunteers for shifts: 12 - 2 PM and 5 - 7 PM
Saturdays and 5 - 7 PM Sundays**

**This is a gap in our service to groups and to the still-suffering alcoholic. Please
consider volunteering for a shift. 303-447-8201**

We connect to alcoholics in these important ways:

1. Central Office facilitates 12 step calls.

Central Office receives calls and emails from alcoholics needing help. Our 12 step volunteers are available to call on those still-suffering alcoholics who have reached out. Volunteers cover the phones from the office during the day and over night through Night Watch, routing calls directly to our volunteers.



2. Central Office helps alcoholics find meetings.

Meetings in Boulder County are listed on our website (about 1,000 visits per month) and in printed schedules. We distribute about 4,000 printed meeting schedules each year.



3. Central Office is where you can purchase AA literature and medallions.

Central Office stocks and sells AA books, pamphlets, and our newsletter, *The Message*, as well as chips commemorating lengths of sobriety.

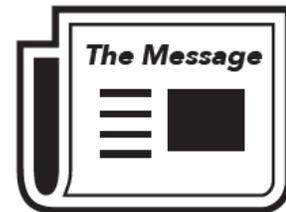
4. Central Office provides opportunities for service.

You can contribute by participating in 12 step calls, answering phones at the office, taking a Night Watch shift, and participating in workshops and events.

5. Through our Bridge the Gap Committee, Intergroup connects with Boulder County alcoholics returning from treatment who are looking for someone to help them get started in AA.



6. Intergroup publishes a monthly newsletter, *The Message* to inform Boulder County alcoholics about local AA events, workshops and other AA news. The Message also publishes personal stories from local AA members.



7. Intergroup provides workshops on a variety of topics. Last year, Intergroup sponsored the New Year's Eve party as a way to give Boulder County alcoholics a safe and fun place to celebrate. Our plan is to make this an annual event.

Each AA member who contributes their time and other resources, such as financial contributions, carries the message of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Help Intergroup Carry the Message

The Message is the newsletter of Boulder County Intergroup. *The Message* serves Intergroup by providing a source of news and information about AA activities and service opportunities throughout Boulder County.

Groups

Send us information about group events, workshops, celebrations and anniversaries.

District 24 and 34

Send us information about committee projects, needs, workshops, and panels

Intergroup and District Committee Chairs

Send us information about committee projects, workshops and panels.

Individual members

We are looking for submissions! Share your experience, strength and hope by writing an article about a step or tradition. Submit artwork, poetry and other creative work.

Contact *The Message* at themessage@bouldercountyaa.org.

INTERGROUP'S 501(c)(3) (TAX-EXEMPT) STATUS

(A Not-So-Brief History)

If you've spent much time in A.A. in Boulder County, there's a chance that you've heard something about Intergroup, and you may even have heard the term "501(c)(3)" in connection with Intergroup. But you may not know what Intergroup is, or what a 501(c)(3) is, either. And even if you do, you may have questions about Intergroup and its 501(c)(3) status. My goal is to answer some of those questions here, and also to provide some general information about the history of Boulder County Intergroup and its current status with regard to the Internal Revenue Service.

According to GSO guidelines, an intergroup (or central office) is: "...an A.A. service that involves a partnership among groups in a community—just as A.A. groups themselves are partnerships of individuals. A central office is established to carry out certain functions common to all the groups—functions which are best handled by a centralized office—and it is usually maintained, supervised, and supported by these groups in their general interest. It exists to aid the groups in their common purpose of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

Boulder County Intergroup provides a number of services to help the groups in their common goal of carrying the message of AA. These include updating and printing meeting schedules, maintaining a website, maintaining a list of 12th-step volunteers, matching alcoholics who are being released from treatment with an AA volunteer to take them to meetings and introduce them to the program (Bridge the Gap), maintaining a phone line and coordinating answering of the phone around the clock, training volunteers to answer the phone, and publishing *The Message* newsletter. Our Intergroup also maintains an office where volunteers are trained and where they can come to answer the phone. Our office sells conference-approved AA literature, and other items. We pay an office manager to do the bookkeeping, and to organize and maintain all of the various functions of the office. All of our Intergroup's income comes from two sources: contributions from AA groups and individual members in Boulder County, and proceeds from the sales of the items mentioned above.

Our Intergroup began as Boulder County Central Office ("Central Office") in the early 1990s, and its name was later changed to Boulder County Intergroup ("Intergroup"). It was established by former member Barb F. (now deceased), who worked as the first Central Office manager until the end of 2008, when ongoing health problems forced her to resign.

In 2003, Barb filed an application for tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code on behalf of Intergroup, and that status was granted by the IRS, so Intergroup became a tax-exempt organization. This meant that Intergroup was not required to pay taxes on its income. Because Intergroup's income was under a certain threshold, Intergroup was also not required to file any tax returns or other information with the IRS for several years; however, in 2006, a change was made to federal tax law which required all non-profit organizations with federal tax-exempt status to submit a simple IRS form, beginning in tax year 2007 and continuing for tax years 2008 and 2009. Organizations that didn't comply would have their tax-exempt status automatically revoked by the IRS in 2010. The organizations that were affected by this change were not notified about it. As a result, beginning in 2010, literally hundreds of thousands of non-profit organizations lost their tax-exempt status. Intergroup was one of those organizations.

During this same time period, Intergroup went through a major, unprecedented transition. Our long-time Central Office manager, Barb, underwent hip replacement surgery in 2006, which, unfortunately, led to a series of complications and mishaps, and a general decline in her health that required her to resign from her position in 2008. She subsequently entered a nursing home, where she died in 2010. In addition to being a difficult personal loss for Intergroup members,

Barb's death precipitated a series of problems and crises for Intergroup that continued to plague the organization for a number of years after her death. This was due, in part, to the fact that many of the duties and responsibilities of the office manager were not well documented at the time of Barb's death. Also, the Intergroup board had no prior experience in hiring or training someone to replace her.

Meeting minutes indicate that Intergroup first became aware of the loss of its tax-exempt status in early 2011. Between 2011 and 2015, various attempts were made by Intergroup board members to submit an application for reinstatement of our tax-exempt status, but the application was never completed and/or submitted. Several factors contributed to Intergroup's ongoing failure to apply for reinstatement, including the fact that our organization is run by volunteers who are not tax professionals. We were also dealing with other tax problems at the time (including an audit by the IRS). When we eventually did hire a tax professional to pay our taxes, he failed to do so. Also, our board members change positions every year, which made it difficult for them to see the application process through to the end. And many of the records needed for completion of our application were missing, due to an office relocation in 2009.

In 2015, the Intergroup president hired an attorney to advise her regarding this situation. The attorney told her that it would be in the best interest of Intergroup to file for reinstatement of its tax-exempt status. He confirmed that, otherwise, Intergroup could be liable for unpaid taxes and/or penalties for the years that the organization was not tax-exempt, and these could total as much as \$15,000-\$18,000. The attorney explained that there were two options for applying for reinstatement. We could ask the IRS for retroactive reinstatement, which, if granted, would be as if we had never lost our tax exempt status; or, we could request reinstatement from the date of the postmark of our application. This would be easier and less expensive to get, but might still leave Intergroup liable for unpaid taxes and/or penalties. The Intergroup body subsequently voted to apply for retroactive reinstatement. It was agreed that Intergroup is not a for-profit organization, and never has been, so seeking retroactive reinstatement seemed to be a more accurate and honest reflection of Intergroup's function and purpose.

In the process of completing the application, it became apparent that filing for retroactive reinstatement also required filing a number of back tax returns. So, Intergroup hired a CPA who specializes in helping to reinstate non-profit organizations who have lost their tax-exempt status, and we paid her several thousand dollars to review our completed application, and to prepare all of the necessary back tax returns. In order to pay for all of this, we initiated a campaign called "Faithful Fivers," asking members to donate five dollars a month, or \$60 for an entire year. We were able to raise the funds that we needed, and the application and tax returns were submitted to the IRS in February 2018. Now we are waiting to see what the outcome of our efforts will be.

I hope that I've been able to clarify this situation a bit for some of you. If you still have questions, please feel free to contact me at president@bouldercountyaa.com, and I will try to answer them. I'm also happy to come visit your group to discuss this, if the group feels that would be helpful.

Thanks to all who have supported us in this effort to keep Intergroup alive and functioning to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic.

In Fellowship and Service,

Robin S.
Boulder County Intergroup President

Daytime Phone Volunteer Service Positions!

Seeking a service opportunity? Do you have 9 months of sobriety and willingness to carry our message to the alcoholic who still suffers?

Daytime phone volunteers are needed for when an alcoholic in need calls Central Office but no one is there to take the call. You will receive a text on your personal phone from our answering service indicating the caller's name, phone number and reason for calling. You will be the front line of AA to reach out to the caller and share your experience, strength and hope around our program of recovery.

Your responsibility once you receive a text:

Our 12th step is "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and practice these principles in all our affairs."

The caller, if actively alcoholic like we were, is a sick person and you may be the person's first contact with AA. You have the responsibility to either call the person directly or use the 12-step list to find an alcoholic who will agree to call.

Typically, our volunteers call back to let the person know that we received the message from the answering service. Some simple questions that can start the conversation:

- 1) What is going on?
- 2) How long since his / her last drink?
- 3) Do they want to stop drinking?
- 4) Has the person been to AA before?
- 5) What happens when they try to stop?

This will provide some more detail if you do choose to go to the 12-step list and have someone else follow up, or may open up the opportunity to share how you relate, what AA is, what AA is not, and what your experience has been in the program.

If you choose to use the 12-step list to have someone else make the call, your responsibility is to try as many people on the 12-step list as necessary until you speak with someone who commits to make the call.

On average, you will be receiving one or two texts per shift.

If you have any questions, or to volunteer for shifts, and have 9 months sobriety, please email the daytime phone coordinator at DPC@bouldercountyAA.com