

Protocol Concerning Special Meetings

This Protocol is provided by the Southern California Area SA Intergroup (SCASAI) to all SA meetings in our area and especially to our Special Meetings. We would only like to offer suggestions for how each group can fulfill its *primary purpose* of carrying the message of SA to the suffering sexaholic.

The main purpose of the Protocol is to prevent an insensitive response to a *non-qualifying* newcomer or visiting SA member when they show up at a *Special Meeting*. “Special Meeting” refers to those SA meetings which are exclusive to men only, women only, same-sex attracted only, etc.; “non-qualifying” refers to the specific attendance requirements of the Special Meeting.

All meetings need to be prepared to receive and introduce any newcomers to the SA program. We cannot reasonably expect every newcomer or visiting SA member to always and accurately interpret the specific instructions used in our Meeting Directory.

Therefore, SCASAI provides the following suggestions.

1. All newcomers (or visiting SA members), regardless of sex/gender identity, are to be welcomed to our program and to our meetings. *No one* is to be simply turned away.
2. At a minimum, two or more members of the group with the most sobriety ought to invite the person inside, meet with them in a safe manner and welcoming space, provide them helpful information about our program and our meetings, and answer any questions they may have. In effect, conduct a Newcomer Information Meeting.
3. For female newcomers, the following items could also be provided: a phone number of a female member in the area, the “SA is for Women” pamphlet, the Welcome Women! statement published in the February 2020 issue of our *Essay* newsletter, and the link to the “For Women” video at www.sa.org/sa.
4. If the person is an SA member visiting from out of town, the Special Meeting ought to consider allowing them to stay for the meeting.
5. If the person is a newcomer, the Special Meeting ought to consider allowing them to return to the meeting the following week, and for so long as it takes to connect the person with others (eg, a woman with another female SA member) and to help the person find a home group.
6. The Special Meeting might consider, perhaps temporarily, holding a separate “mixed meeting” at the regular location. Those members willing to meet regularly with the newcomer would participate in this separate co-located meeting.
7. If the Special Meeting wants additional information or a specific format for conducting any of the types of meetings described above, contact SCASAI at the phone number or email address listed on the front page of the Meeting Directory at www.sasocal.org.
8. Above all, the newcomer is to be lovingly received, compassionately guided, and kindly directed to meetings and resources. We need always remember that at one point we were all newcomers and to keep in mind the courage necessary to walk through the door of our first meeting