

## Below is a summary of what was discussed during Old Business at the Intergroup Business meeting held on September 14, 2020

### Investigating other options for how we handle our phone after hours

#### **Why are other options being explored?**

- 1) Our call volume on nights and weekends no longer seems to warrant the amount of time & resources we invest in having a live person answer the phone. Additionally, we miss calls, for various reasons, but missed calls in relation to a 24-hour helpline is bad business
- 2) Our calls are primarily information calls (meeting locations and times), only about 1-3 calls each month are actual 12-step calls. (NOTE: 12-step calls in 2020= August-1, July-1, June-1, May-1, April-2, March-2....Sept 2019- 7, Oct 2019- 6)

#### **What do other near-by Intergroups do after hours?**

**Des Moines uses an answering service:** Note: since March, however, their phone has been transferred to one person 24/7 since the nature of the calls changed so much.

**Peoria (and Pekin area) does essentially what we do:** Volunteers sign up and answer the phone nights/weekends like we do (they are on a rotation though, where each *group* is responsible for a particular week).

**Iowa City uses an answering service:** They no longer have an Intergroup and have been using an answering service for about 3 years (same service Cedar Rapids uses).

#### **What can you ask your groups to discuss and consider?**

**Please discuss these options with your groups at your business meetings:**

- 1) **Answering Service:** While answering services cost money, they are very flexible and can tailor their service according to our needs. We would provide the answering service with our website information so they are able to answer simple information calls (meeting locations and times). If someone calls wanting to ask questions that only we can answer, for instance to discuss their drinking, the answering service takes their first name/ph#, puts the caller on hold, and calls someone on our list (12-step list we provide them) and after reaching someone then connects the two together. At \$50/month for 60 minutes of call time, it isn't a terrible expense.

Discussion took place during the meeting about how the answering service could uphold the confidentiality of the members on the 12-step list. Julie noted the answering service deals with doctors/patients and has to adhere to HIPAA laws, so most likely this isn't an issue. Additionally, our 12-step list contains first name/last initial only and ph#.

UPDATE: Per conversation with the POC at the answering service--All reps/operators are trained in HIPAA laws and have a clear understanding of the importance of upholding the confidences of callers and our list of members, before they ever take a call.

2<sup>nd</sup> UPDATE: We would be allowed a 2-week free trial which will help determine which package we should start with. Free trial also gives us access to their web portal allowing us to see the # of calls, the time of each call, and how long each call took to handle.

- 2) **Our current phone company, Vonage, has a VM service.** When VM is set up and someone leaves a VM, a notification can be sent to an email address or phone alerting us we have a VM. We can have up to 5 email addresses and 5 mobile phone numbers for VM notifications. The outgoing message could direct callers to the website for simple information calls about meeting locations and times, and if they want to speak with someone directly, the message might ask for first name and phone# and someone will return their call.
  
- 3) **Leave it as-is for now.** Maybe we can revisit this again once groups are back to meeting in-person, able to hold business meetings, and contributions are back up.

Please bring back any discussion/questions to the next Intergroup Business meeting in October.