

# BRIDGING THE GAP

*“One Alcoholic Helping Another”*



## Extending the Hand of Alcoholics Anonymous



## BTG Treatment Facilities Wookbook

**A Guide to Bridging the Gap – Charlotte, Area 51**  
**Districts-13** Gaston, **14** Lincoln, **15** Rutherford/Cleveland, **41** Mecklenburg, **42**  
Union/Anson, **43** Mecklenburg, **44** Mecklenburg, **45**  
Cabarrus/Stanley/Montgomery  
**Regions, II & III**

Visit the Charlotte, Area 51 Site at [www.Charlotteaa.org](http://www.Charlotteaa.org)

## Introduction to Bridging the Gap – Charlotte, Area 51

The Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous offers a program designed to assist *new members* after their release from treatment facilities. This service is commonly referred to as the “*Bridging the Gap*” or “*Temporary Contact*” program. It is currently administered in Charlotte through the statewide Alcoholics Anonymous service structure known as Area 51. This Area is a member of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in the United States and Canada. It is comprised of eleven geographical and one linguistic district which coordinate “*Bridging the Gap*” collectively. These districts respond to the needs of the members in facilities within their vicinity and cooperate with each other to accommodate requests outside of their boundaries.

Simply put, a *temporary contact* is an A.A. member who works with clients after they are discharged from treatment facilities. The *temporary contact* helps the *new member* “*Bridge the Gap*” between the facility and Alcoholics Anonymous in their community. This arrangement is meant to be temporary only. The volunteer has agreed to accompany the *new member* to as many as six meetings after their release in order to acquaint them with A.A. members and meetings in the area where they live.

Experience has shown that attending an A.A. meeting as soon as possible after release is vital to making a sober transition to life on the outside. During this time the *new member* will learn more about sponsors, home groups, working A.A.’s twelve steps and doing service work. The *temporary contact* volunteer is available to answer questions and explain the A.A. program of recovery. **They will not provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or other such services. The new member will most likely hear five basic suggestions for sobriety that the Fellowship shares with all its members:**

- 1) **Don’t drink.**
- 2) **Go to meetings.**
- 3) **Work the steps.**
- 4) **Call your sponsor.**
- 5) **Read the “Big Book,” Alcoholics Anonymous.**

### Bridging the Gap - Basic Program Procedures:

1. As a *new member* to treatment, they are eligible for this program when they are close to their release date.
2. They are asked to fill out a form giving their, sex, and release date with a phone number and address where they will be released to if possible; a general location if not.
3. The local A.A. Bridging the Gap coordinator will notify the *new member* after receiving their application and then match them with a suitable *temporary contact*, taking into consideration their sex, and destination.
4. After selection, the *temporary contact* will confirm the request with the *new member*. And confirm connection to the BGT Coordinator.
5. The *new member* and the *temporary contact* will then make arrangements to meet after the release date and attend their first A.A. meeting together.

## Bridging the Gap – Charlotte, Area 51

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### Preface to Bridging the Gap Guidelines – Charlotte, Area 51

In order to better understand how bridging the Gap is administered in Charlotte, Area 51 the following is a brief outline of the basic elements of the program and who holds responsibility.

#### Responsibilities of Area 51

1) **Database.** The BGT Coordinator and Co-Coordinator will maintain a BTG volunteer database archive for the Districts according to information supplied by the Districts.

2) **Program.** Information sharing and supporting documents will be provided by the joint efforts of the BTG Coordinator and Co-Coordinator and Standing District Chairs. The Standing Chairs will offer their support helping the BTG Coordinator set up and maintain a Bridging the Gap program.

3) **Workshops.** TBD.

#### Starting BTG

1) **Presentation.** Make the program available. Contact Treatment facilities and present the BTG Program to the staff. After gaining permission from the facility you may choose to present the introduction letter. **Introduction To Bridging The Gap**

2) **Volunteers.** BTG volunteers may be signed up at A.A. meetings and other appropriate A.A. events. It is best if they are given BTG information and briefed on the *Temporary Contact* program. **GSRs and District Officers may distribute and collect volunteer sign-up pamphlets.**

3) **Volunteer database and Temporary Contact Requests.** This task is best done by one individual, a Bridging the Gap Coordinator; someone dedicated to watching the mailbox and/or phone who will also make the *Temporary Contact* assignments. Requests for “Bridges” outside of the District should be referred to the appropriate **District or Area Chairperson** or processed through the National Bridging the Gap Database ([www.btgww.org](http://www.btgww.org)) if out of state.

## Documents Used in Bridging the Gap – Charlotte, Area 51

Please maintain the contents of this kit so that interested members of your district can make use of it. Feel free to make as many copies of the materials it contains as necessary. Area 51 documents may be updated and redistributed periodically as needed. **Please pass this workbook and its contents to the next District Standing Chairperson after rotation.**

### **Charlotte, Area 51**

#### BTG Publications:

Introduction to Bridging the Gap  
Preface to Bridging the Gap  
Suggested Literature Package Lists  
Bridging the Gap Guidelines  
Do's & Don'ts Page  
Sample letter from the BTG Coordinator to the New Member  
Sample letter from the Volunteer to the New Member  
Letter to the Treatment Patient  
BTG Pamphlet: "So you've Been Told ....."  
**BTG Pamphlet: "Temporary Contact Request" (Orange & White)**  
**BTG Pamphlet: "Temporary Contact Volunteer" (Blue & White)**  
BTG Volunteer Sign-up Sheet  
BTG Volunteer Ledgers  
BTG New Member Ledgers  
A.A. Bridging the Gap – Charlotte, Area 51 (white cards)  
Temporary Contact Request Card (blue)  
Temporary Contact Volunteer Card (white)  
BTG: Volunteer Presentation Kit  
BTG: Facility Administrator Kit  
BTG: Group GSR Kit  
North Carolina, Area 51 District Map

Alcoholics  
Anonymous  
Guidelines:

Temporary Contact Guidelines (Treatment workbook excerpt)  
Temporary Contact Guidelines (Corrections workbook excerpt)  
Cooperation with the Professional Community  
Treatment Facilities Committees

GSO  
Pamphlets:

Bridging the Gap (P-49)  
AA in Treatment Facilities (P-27)  
A.A. at a glance (F-1)  
Information on Alcoholics Anonymous (F-2)  
Where Do I Go From Here? (F-4)  
A Newcomer Asks (P-24)  
Is A.A. For You? (P-3)  
Questions and Answers on Sponsorship (P-15)  
A.A. Fact Sheet - service material from the GSO

GSO - aa.org

Additional Information Available - How to Find Meetings:  
Central Offices, Intergroup & Answering Services - U.S. & Canada  
Bridging the Gap Area Coordinators for the United States and Canada

## Suggested Literature Packages for Bridging the Gap

These literature items have been selected because they are relevant for their category.

### Treatment Facility Staff

A.A. in Treatment Facilities (P-27)  
A.A. as a Resource for the  
Health Care Professional (P-23)

### Treatment Clients &Volunteers

Is A.A. For You? (P-3)  
Information on A.A. (F-2)  
Bridging the Gap (P-49)  
BTG Pamphlet “*New Member*”

**Bridging the Gap Volunteer Sign-Up Sheet**  
**For members willing to be a Temporary Contacts**

Bridging the Gap is the hand of Alcoholics Anonymous reaching out to the new member. This is basic 12-Step work. When a newcomer leaves a treatment facility, the Bridging the Gap program can arrange a temporary contact in their home town. The temporary contact volunteer accompanies them to meetings, introduces them to others in recovery and helps them start their life of sobriety in the outside world.

If you are willing to be a temporary contact, fill out your personal information in the form below. It is suggested that you have at least one year of sobriety to be a temporary contact. **A good form transportation will also be necessary. Please note if you are bi-lingual, Yes or No!**

Full Name	Address & Zip Code		SEX	Phone	Email	Sobriety Date	Y	N

**Return to the:** BTG Coordinator or Charlotte Area 51 Intergroup Office 1427 Elizabeth Ave, Charlotte, NC 28204

## Bridging the Gap Guidelines – Charlotte, Area 51

The purpose of Bridging the Gap in Charlotte, Area 51 is to assist the new member who is confined and preparing for release from a treatment facility. It is designed to help them make the transition to the A.A. Fellowship where they will be living. The activities of this program are based on and governed by the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.

***Bridging the Gap should be thought of as basic twelfth step work.*** The idea is to accompany a new member to several of their first outside meetings and introduce them to A.A. members in the community. Once a Client has expressed an interest in A.A. and would like to attend meetings after being released, the Bridging the Gap program offers a solution to support this important adjustment. New members who attend an A.A. meeting within the first two days after returning home have been shown to have a much better chance of staying sober.

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## I. Basics of the Charlotte, Area 51 Bridging the Gap Program

A. The client completes a request form including their name, and gender, current contact information, release date, and contact information after their release. They may choose to hand deliver the pamphlet to a facility staff member familiar with the BTG program, mail it or email their request directly to the BTG Coordinator.

B. The information is then given to a local temporary contact volunteer unless the request being made is outside of the district. In that case the information will be forwarded to the district or area where the new member will be going.

C. The volunteer will make arrangements to accompany them along with another member to an A.A. meeting within 24-48 hours after their release. They will then attend as many as six meetings together provided they show willingness.

## II. Duties and Responsibilities of the Charlotte, Area 51 BTG Committee

### A. Volunteer Database

The BTG Coordinator will maintain a database of temporary contact volunteers. This database is administered by the BTG Coordinator. Groups needing information for “*Bridges*” outside of their districts may contact the BTG Coordinator or Co-Coordinator for assistance. They may also use the International BTG web site, [www.btgww.org](http://www.btgww.org)

### B. Area 51 Bridging the Gap Program

The BTG Coordinator will continue to gather information helpful in revising and improving this program. Each year The BTG Coordinator of the Districts attends the National Bridging the Gap Conference.

The BTG Coordinator or Co-Coordinator are responsible to inform and to share the combined Districts Bridging the Gap experience with the Districts. They will maintain the Bridging the Gap documents and procedures and review them on an annual basis. These documents will be updated and revised as necessary through the joint cooperation of the Area treatment and treatment standing committees.

In general, the only direct involvement of the BTG Coordinator and Co- Coordinator in Bridging the Gap is to assist making “*Bridges*” involving contacts between other Districts of the A.A. General Service structure.



### **C. Bridging the Gap Workshop**

### **D. Bridging the Gap workshops TBD.**

### **Duties and Responsibilities of the BTG Coordinator**

In Charlotte, Area 51, The BTG Coordinator manages the Bridging the Gap program. They find volunteers, present the program at facilities, and maintain a database to match new member requests with temporary contact volunteers.

The information contained in this kit is a collection of suggestions based on the experience shared within the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. The information contained in this kit are meant to be used in a manner that best fits the needs of each individual district.

Managing the activities of the Bridging the Gap Program is the basic responsibility of the BTG coordinator. In the absence of a BTG Coordinator, the Co-BTG Coordinator generally assumes these responsibilities.

### **III. Bridging the Gap Program Procedures**

Bridging the Gap has three main components; ***preparation, presentation, and implementation***. These responsibilities may be approached in a variety of ways. Each BTG Coordinator determines what works best for them considering their circumstances. The following ideas are suggestions for each of these areas.

## **A. Preparing Bridging the Gap Volunteers**

- 1) Area 51 has A.A Temporary Contact/Bridging the Gap Pamphlets. These pamphlets can be circulated at A.A. gatherings such as regular group meetings, assemblies, and workshops. This information is to be considered confidential and for use by Bridging the Gap only. Some members are sensitive to their contact information and may wish to apply by using the [bridgingthegap@charlotteaa.org](mailto:bridgingthegap@charlotteaa.org) email address or mailing the application directly to the intergroup office.
- 2) Once a volunteer has submitted the *temporary contact* application, it is a good idea to call and verify their intentions and contact information.
- 3) It is suggested that the BTG volunteer has at least one year of current and continuous sobriety and that they are comfortable within their Home group and fellowship. It is also strongly suggested that two members accompany the newly released contact to their first outside meeting.
- 4) Many of our members who have experienced making twelfth step calls can readily adapt to Bridging the Gap.

## **B. Presentation to Facilities and New Members**

### **Facility Administrators**

- 1) Meet with appropriate staff members and explain what bridging the Gap is and how it works. Usually this discussion is made by the BTG coordinator and at least one other committee member. Ask for permission to explain the program to the Clients and distribute the pamphlets.
- 2) **Ask about rules the institution may have in regard to contact with outside members.** For example, some facilities will not allow the same person bringing meetings into the facilities to be a temporary contact to a newly released member.

### **New Members**

- 1) Bridging the Gap may be introduced in many different ways. One method is to hold a special meeting entirely devoted to Bridging the Gap. Another approach is to have the members who take A.A. meetings into the facility explain the program periodically.

- 2) Emphasize the need for complete and accurate contact information. Stress the importance of timely submission of their request in order to assure processing before their release date. By using the small sign-up pamphlets they can register more easily and save the time and expense of postage.
- 3) Inform the new members about how to reach Alcoholics Anonymous in case they are released before the temporary contact has been made or in the event they make their decision to participate after they have returned home.

### **C. Volunteer Database and Temporary Contact Requests.**

#### **Database**

- 1) Once a group of volunteers have submitted their contact information it is suggested that the BTG coordinator separate them into two categories, one for men and one for women. It is also recommended to keep a list of the new members who request a bridge and comments concerning the results of the BTG effort.
- 2) It is suggested that the database be refreshed periodically to insure the temporary contacts are still available and willing to participate. Direct phone calls made to the volunteers are generally more successful than mailings.
- 3) Once a comfortable number of volunteers have been entered into the database it might be well to suspend recruiting activities until demand overtakes volunteers again. An excessive database can have a negative effect if the volunteers lack an opportunity to participate.

#### **Temporary Contact Requests**

- 1) A timely response to requests is essential to preserve the hope and confidence of the new member. If a volunteer is available it is good to have them make the initial contact and begin the “Bridge” process. If no one is readily available, the BTG coordinator should let the new member know a temporary contact will be located as soon as possible.
- 2) It would be helpful to the area for the districts to share the experiences of those who have been involved in Bridging the Gap in order to make future improvements to the program.

## Suggestions for Bridging the Gap Volunteers

### What A.A. and Bridging the Gap Does:

1. Helps people with a desire to stop drinking to find a solution to their problem.
2. Helps the new member adjust to the A.A. Fellowship outside of institutions.

### What A.A. and Bridging the Gap Do Not Do:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Furnish initial motivation.               | 10. Hold classes.                             |
| 2. Solicit members.                          | 11. Practice medicine, psychiatry, or nursing |
| 3. Charge dues or fees.                      | 12. Offer religious services.                 |
| 4. Operate clinics or drying-out facilities. | 13. Offer professional counseling.            |
| 5. Operate clubs.                            | 14. Accept money from non-members.            |
| 6. Provide housing, meals or transportation. | 15. Do research.                              |
| 7. Keep membership records.                  | 16. Join councils or social agencies.         |
| 8. Follow-up on errant members.              | 17. Loan money.                               |
| 9. Control members.                          |   |

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### “Do” List

1. Take the new member to a meeting within the first Twenty-four hours of release.
2. Take another member of the fellowship on this Twelfth Step Call.
3. Explain to the new member that this is a temporary commitment, usually limited to six visits.
4. Make sure the new members receive meeting schedules, phone numbers, literature, and Big Book.
5. Encourage them to attend meetings as often as possible, emphasize the importance of the home group.
6. Explain the important of sponsorship; share how you got your sponsor.
7. Refrain from profanity, off-color jokes, prolonged drunk-a-logs and other types of self-indulgence.
8. Respect full anonymity of new members at all times.
9. Keep in touch with your sponsor and your High Power.

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### “Don’t” List

1. Don’t become responsible for the members attitude or actions in or out of the meetings.
2. Don’t become a personal taxi service.
3. Don’t let the new member dictate where to go for the meetings.
4. Don’t allow any emotional or romantic relationship to develop.
5. Don’t act in any reporting or communicating capacity regarding the new member and the justice system or treatment facilities.
6. Don’t intercede in behalf of any individual affected by decisions of the administration.
7. Don’t forget you are not in control, you are not GOD.

## **The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

## **The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A. as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name out never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press radio and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

## **A.A. FACT SHEET**

### ***The Preamble of Alcoholics .anonymous***

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are No dues or fees for A.A. Membership; we are self-supporting through our own Contributions.

A.A... Is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or Institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor Opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve Sobriety.

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### **What AA. Do's**

Nonalcoholic guests are welcome at "open" A.A. meetings. Attendance at "closed" meetings! Are limited to those who are alcoholic or think they may have a drinking Problem.

At meetings A.A. Members share their recovery experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem, and give person-to-person services or "Sponsorship" to the alcoholics coming to A.A.

The A.A. program, as set forth in the Twelve Steps to recovery, offers the alcoholic an opportunity to develop a satisfying way of life free from alcohol.

### **What A.A Does "NOT" Do.**

1. Make medical or psychiatric diagnoses or prognosis, or offer advice.
2. Provide drying-out or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, housing, jobs, Money or other welfare services.
3. Accept any money for its services or contributions from outside sources.
4. Provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials., social Agencies, employers, etc.
5. Research, professional treatment for client.

*Our recovery is based on sharing our experience, strength and hope with each other, that we may solve our common problem; more importantly, our continued sobriety depends upon helping others to recover from alcoholism*

## Guidelines for A.A. Members Who Are Temporary Contacts

### Introduction

Past experience has shown that attending an A.A. meeting on the outside on the day of release from treatment is one of the most effective tools for an client in making a sober transition and maintaining continued sobriety in the free world. It is strongly recommended that a client have an A.A. contact on the outside (**preferably with one year's sobriety and of the same sex**) who contacts the client and arranges to meet him or her on the day of release to help in "Bridging the Gap" between the institution and A.A. on the outside.

This section of the Workbook deals with guidelines for A.A. members who want to participate in this type of service.

### Guidelines for Prerelease A.A. Contacts

The following guidelines for A.A. contacts have been drawn from the past experience of many A.A. members who are involved in this rewarding form of Twelfth Step work.

1. As in all types of sponsorship in A.A., prerelease contacts share their experience, strength and hope with soon-to-be-released inmates.
2. We have found that it is better for men to work with men and for women to work with women.
3. If possible, an A.A. contact should be a member of an A.A. group located in the vicinity of the client's residence when he or she is released.
4. As in all Twelfth Step work, it is suggested that two A.A. members meet the client upon release.

Charlotte BTG Officers:

Coordinator: Rocky.L bridgingthegap@charlotteaa.org

Co-Coordinator: Cheyenne.B, bridgingthegap@charlotteaa.org

## Guidelines for A.A. Members Who are Temporary Contacts

From the GSO Treatment Workbook - page 16

1. The temporary contact makes direct personal contact with the client while he/she is still at the treatment center - either by telephone, visiting the facility, attending a meeting together or whatever contact is thought necessary. Prison inmates have different rules. Check with BTG coordinator.
2. The contacts and newcomers make every effort to attend one meeting together on the release date.
3. Thereafter, for at least two weeks, the contact will help the newcomer to attend a variety of meetings, introduce him/her to other A.A.s, especially members who might have similar backgrounds or interests.
4. The contact familiarizes newcomers with A.A. books, pamphlets, schedule of meetings, etc.
5. Explain sponsorship to the newcomer, and the importance of obtaining a sponsor without delay. (Much information pertinent to sponsorship is to be found in the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship.")
6. A temporary contact is an A.A. enjoying a comfortable, stable sobriety, preferably for at least a year.
7. The series of phone calls, involving busy people, to line up an appropriate temporary contact can be very time consuming. It is therefore important to communicate with the treatment facility about allowing adequate time for the contact to get together before the client's discharge date.

A few cautionary words from those who have offered this kind of service before. These are not rules, but a sharing of experience.

1. You may be the first outside A.A. contact that the person meets. Be affable, friendly, interested.
2. Be on time for whatever appointment you make.
3. As a volunteer member of the Contact service Committee, your act of service consists of introducing the person to the local group or meeting. It is suggested that you explain what A.A. is and the Twelve Step program of recovery, and also what A.A. does not do.
4. Try to avoid becoming a long-term taxi service.
5. Try not to confuse the temporary contact service with long-term sponsorship.
6. Take the time to introduce the person you escort to as many A.A. members at the meeting as possible. Be sure to include an introduction to the group secretary and/or meeting chairperson.
7. If a group goes out for coffee after the meeting, ask your contact if he/she wants to join the "meeting after the meeting."
8. Try not to push your contact; some people are very shy.
9. Use your own sense of what's happening in your contact's recovery to dictate how many meetings you take him/her to.
10. Provide the contact with a meeting schedule.
11. Keep the general conversation to A.A. related matters.
12. Avoid becoming involved in discussions about your contact's treatment or confinement. We have no opinions about outside issues.

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