

## Introduction to Bridging the Gap Eastern Pennsylvania - Area 59

The Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous offers a program designed to assist *new members* after their release from treatment and correctional facilities. This service is commonly referred to as the “*Bridging the Gap*” or “*Temporary Contact*” program. Area 59 is comprised of forty-eight geographical districts 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 from outside of their boundaries.

Simply put, a *temporary contact* is an A.A. member who works with clients/inmates after they are discharged from treatment or correctional 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 **do 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. A confined member is eligible for this program when they are within three months of being released.
2. They fill out a form giving their name, age, gender, and release date along with a phone number and address where released if possible; a general location if not.
3. The Bridging the Gap coordinator will match them with a suitable temporary contact, taking into consideration age, sex, and destination.
4. After selection, the temporary contact will confirm the request with the new member.
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.