

GUIDELINES FOR EL CERRITO FELLOWSHIP SECRETARIES

Updated June 10th and June 17, 2024

The Meeting Secretary is a key person in Alcoholics Anonymous. Meetings are possible only with a Secretary. This document outlines the requirements and responsibilities of the Meeting Secretaries at the El Cerrito Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

REQUIREMENTS

- ✓ Six months of continuous sobriety as a member of AA. (Note: continuous sobriety is defined as complete abstinence from alcohol and drugs.)
- ✓ One month at the El Cerrito Fellowship.
- ✓ Attend ECF Business Meetings or arrange for another member to represent the group.
- ✓ Attend a Secretary Workshop

If you meet the requirements, please volunteer at the meeting of your choice. The group will then hold an election. If you are elected, give your name, phone number and email to the Secretary Coordinator, and attend a Secretary Workshop. Call the Secretary Coordinator with any questions.

Secretaries and Techs are strongly encouraged to attend ECF's monthly Business Meeting at 5:30 pm Pacific Time) on the second Monday of each month. If you cannot attend, please appoint a regular group member to attend and represent the group. Report back to your group relevant items covered at the Business Meeting, including any Group Conscience issue, Intergroup and General Service items, and anything else that may affect the meetings or the Fellowship or AA as a whole.

NOTE: If a Secretary fails to maintain continuous sobriety, they shall forfeit the position.

MEETING GUIDELINES

Arrange for an alternate Secretary if you are ill or cannot honor your commitment. If you cannot find someone to cover the meeting, call the Secretary Coordinator. Please do not leave your meeting without a Secretary.

1. For Speaker Meetings, select a chairperson/speaker. For open meetings, the chairperson/speaker should have 3 months of continuous sobriety in AA. For closed meetings, the chairperson/speaker should have 6 months sobriety in AA.
2. Open the zoom room 15 minutes before the meeting start time. Greet members, especially newcomers. During this time, invite members to read How It Works, the Traditions, the 9th Step promises and/or other AA conference approved literature.

3. Conduct the meeting per the **EL CERRITO FELLOWSHIP ONLINE MEETING SCRIPT** which can be found on the ECF website: [ecfaa.org/A.A. Resources | El Cerrito Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous](http://ecfaa.org/A.A.Resources|ElCerritoFellowshipofAlcoholicsAnonymous).
4. Using the meeting script, make housekeeping announcements at the beginning of the ZOOM meeting.
5. Either the secretary or tech should make the announcements posted on the ECF website. All announcements must be AA related. Announcements from ecfaa.org/announcements should be shortened. Key items and the link to ECF announcements can be posted in the chat by the tech or secretary. Secretaries should also ask if there are any AA related announcements from the floor – inviting members to make relevant announcements.
6. If a speaker/discussion meeting, the Chairperson (speaker) qualifies 10-15 minutes. In literature meetings, secretaries may ask a member to share about the reading for about 5 minutes.
7. While the meeting is in progress, disruptive persons should be asked to discontinue their behavior or leave. If behavior persists, put person in the waiting room. Also, put any zoom bombers into the waiting room.
8. If needed, the secretary may repeat the ECF guideline regarding crosstalk during the meeting. This would be done in between member shares.
9. Midway through the meeting, the tech (or secretary) should post the 7th Tradition announcement and the Court Card Verification announcement (instructions),
10. At the end of the meeting: Whenever possible, keep the doors open for up to 15 minutes.
11. Then “SIGN OUT” of Zoom. No one, including another secretary, is to be in the zoom room between meetings (the exception is someone doing business for the Fellowship).

MAINTAINING A SAFE & WELCOMING ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

Understand Our Common Welfare/ECF Disruptive Behavior Policy. Disruptive persons should be asked to discontinue their behavior or leave. Disruptive behavior has been defined as that which interrupts or breaks up a meeting in progress. Secretaries may use the “chat” feature to ask individuals to stop the disruptive behavior. If the behavior continues, secretaries should use the chat feature to advise the individual that due to the disruption they are being placed in the Waiting Room. Place those who continue disrupting in the Waiting Room. Advise the tech or secretary that you have done so, alerting them not to readmit.

The following changes were approved by group conscience during ECF Business Meetings held on June 10 and June 17, 2024.

1. Our meeting script says: “Before the meeting starts ask for volunteers to read 1) How It Works, 2) The 12 Traditions, 3) 9th Step Promises and/or 4) other AA approved literature. The July 2024 script now reads “... and/or other AA **conference approved** literature.” During discussion of this amendment, it was pointed out that some meetings may choose not to read excerpts from literature that reference to “God.” A complete listing of AA Conference approved literature can be found at <https://www.aa.org/resources/literature>.
2. At the beginning of meetings, instead of saying “If you have entered the room with your first and last name we will remove your last name on-screen”, we now ask that secretaries say “We suggest you log on with your first name and last initial in order to maintain safety in our online environment.” The reason for this change is that we don’t have rules in AA nor do we require conformity. There have been objections to our automatically removing last names. We feel it best to leave this up to each individual. At the same time, we originally decided to remove last names to protect members from zoom bombers, so we do still want to say something about naming as a safety concern.
3. Instead of asking about “newcomers,” ask:
 - Is there anyone here for their first (second or third) AA meeting ever? If so, please unmute and introduce yourself so that we can welcome you.
 - Is there anyone here in their first 30 (or, 60 and 90 as an option) days of sobriety? If so, please unmute and let us welcome and support you. Optional: Or is there anyone counting days.
 - Is there anyone else attending this meeting for the first time? Please unmute and introduce yourself so that we can welcome you!

The reasons for these changes include:

- As an online fellowship with members logging in from all over the State, country and other countries, it’s no longer appropriate to ask “Is there anyone here from out-of-town” or similar language.
 - The word “newcomer” is unclear, as one of ours recently pointed out. We really want to know if there are people present who are new to AA, in early sobriety, or new to the meeting.
1. **For meetings that reserve the last 10 minutes for “newcomers” to share**, we ask that secretaries not call on individuals by name but rather leave it up to the individual whether or not they want to volunteer to share. This is to assure that we do not risk embarrassing anyone, or “putting them on the spot.” Those in early sobriety may feel uncomfortable, “called out” or compelled to speak. In addition, those new to AA may have been told that all they had to do is show up – that they would not be required to do anything more.

2. **Suggestions for addressing inappropriate images that might trigger outside issues or be found offensive.** There are concerns about background pictures or “identifiers” that members might add to their names -for example: their profession, or things which might suggest a particular political position - which could divert us from our primary purpose and bring outside issues into our meeting. It is suggested that the secretary or tech “chat” with the individual if it feels necessary to ask that the picture or words need to be removed. In making that request we suggest that the secretary or tech give a reason for the request. If the member chooses not to comply with the request, we do not believe we should remove the member from the meeting. On the other hand, should the image or words trigger comments during the meeting, it may be necessary for the secretary to remind the group of our Traditions and point out that we are addressing outside issues and ask the group to return to comments about alcoholism.

The reason for this guidance is that on occasion, members have had images on their zoom screens that were deemed offensive (sexually suggestive) or that reflected outside issues, for example: a political statement or advertisement. These may violate our traditions or trigger discussion of outside issues. We believe secretaries should be able to address these instances at their discretion.

MANAGING SECRETARY ROTATION

1. **ROTATION:** It is the tradition of this Fellowship to rotate secretary positions every six months on July 1 and January 1. Start announcing this several weeks before. Allow time for members to volunteer to serve as secretary or tech and for the group to approve them. This might be done in 5 minutes before closing the meeting. Candidates may be in the Waiting Room while a vote is taken.
2. Although some may choose to share a secretary position, one secretary for each meeting is ECF’s “default” position.
3. It is recommended that the new Secretary invite the outgoing Secretary to chair the following week. The outgoing Secretary is asked to review these guidelines with the new Secretary, so the new Secretary understands what is required.
4. In the case where there are no volunteers from the group, the outgoing Secretary should contact the Secretary Coordinator so that meeting coverage can be arranged.. Note that if there is no secretary, there will not be a meeting.
5. **VERY IMPORTANT:** The newly elected secretary should attend the Secretary workshop and give name, phone number and email to the Secretary Coordinator.