



Embracing Modern Communication

A.A., Social Media, and MG-18 Outreach

Presented by Dave D.,
District 12 DCM



Training Goals

Social Media Use



Understand MG-18

MG-18 serves as a crucial guideline for integrating A.A.'s principles into modern digital communication while ensuring the protection of anonymity and the integrity of the message.

Safe Social Media

Participants will learn to navigate social media responsibly, respecting A.A. traditions while utilizing these platforms to enhance outreach and foster community engagement.

Explore Area X

Area X showcases practical examples of responsible digital outreach, demonstrating how various platforms can work together while adhering to MG-18 guidelines and maintaining anonymity.

Evolution of Communication

From Bulletin Boards to Social Media

A bulletin board located in a public place like grocery store or a community center has AA flyers and information posted on it. Which of the persons below is an alcoholic? All? None? One? *Who can tell?*



Communication has transformed significantly, transitioning from traditional methods like corkboards to modern platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, enhancing connectivity while preserving anonymity and outreach principles.

Anonymity Concerns



- **Concern:** breaking anonymity or harming AA's reputation.
 - Individuals control their own anonymity online.
 - Service bodies post general information online, monitor comments, and limit posts.
 - If there is concern, do not like or comment on posts and no one will know you were there.
- **Reality:** anonymity is a personal responsibility.
 - We protect AA by practicing principles, not avoiding platforms.

MG-18 Guidelines: Overview & Core Principles

Overview:

- MG-18 = AA's Internet Guidelines.
- Purpose: protect anonymity and uphold Traditions online.
- Guidance, not governance
Each group acts by conscience.

Core Principles

- Protect anonymity at the public level.
- Avoid implied affiliation or endorsement.
- Practice attraction, not promotion.
- Encourage individual responsibility.

A.A.® Guidelines Internet

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an *informed* group conscience.

A.A. TRADITIONS AND THE INTERNET

We observe all A.A.'s principles and Traditions on A.A. public media such as the Internet.

Anonymity — As anonymity is the "spiritual foundation of all our Traditions," we observe anonymity on public websites at all times.

In 2013, the 63rd General Service Conference affirmed that "the Internet, social media, and all forms of public communications are implicit in the last phrase of the short form of Tradition Eleven, which reads: '...at the level of press, radio, and films.'"

As Bill W. wrote: "At this attitude [public], anonymity — 100 percent anonymity — was the only possible answer. Here, principles would have to come before personalities without exception."

In simplest form, this means that A.A.s do not publicly identify themselves as A.A. members using their full names and/or full-face photos. For more information on anonymity online, see the section of this Guideline, "Guarding Anonymity Online."

Attraction not promotion — As our co-founder, Bill W., wrote: "Public information takes many forms — the simple sign outside a meeting place that says 'A.A. meeting tonight'; listing in local phone directories; distribution of A.A. literature; and radio and television shows using sophisticated media techniques. Whatever the form, it comes down to 'one drunk carrying the message to another drunk,' whether through personal contact or through the use of third parties and the media."

Self-support — In keeping with our Seventh Tradition, A.A. pays its own expenses and this also applies in cyberspace. To avoid confusion and to guard against the perception of affiliation, endorsement or promotion, care should be taken in selection of the website host. Website committees have avoided any host site that requires the inclusion of mandatory advertising space or links to commercial sites.

Many "free" web hosting services require that the website include mandatory advertisements or links. Most A.A. website committees see this as actual or implied affiliation or endorsement of the products or services listed in those ads. They have found it prudent to create a website through a service that does not include mandatory advertisements or links.

Nonaffiliation, nonendorsement — Linking to other A.A. websites will often have the positive effect of significantly broadening the scope of a site. However, even when linking to another A.A. site, care must be exercised since each A.A. entity is autonomous, has its own group conscience, and may display information that another A.A. group conscience might find objectionable. There is no way to know when this might occur.

Experience indicates that linking to non-A.A. sites is even more problematic. Not only are they much more likely to display non-A.A. and/or controversial material, but linking might imply endorsement, if not affiliation. In the final analysis, experience strongly suggests that, when considering linking to another site, proceed with caution.

G.S.O. has attempted to avoid some of these pitfalls on G.S.O.'s A.A. website, aa.org, by confining its links to known A.A. service entities and by incorporating a mandatory exit statement when someone wishes to activate the outside links on the site. (This statement also covers access to application software such as Adobe Reader, which is provided to assist visitors in reading Portable Document Format (PDF) files.)

GUARDING ANONYMITY ONLINE

Modern communication in A.A. is flowing from one alcoholic to another in ways that are high-tech, relatively open-ended and evolving quickly. Protecting anonymity is a major concern for members, who are accessing the Internet in ever-growing numbers.

As Bill W. noted, "Anonymity has two attributes essential to our individual and collective survival; the spiritual and the practical. On the spiritual level, anonymity demands the greatest discipline of which we are capable; on the practical level anonymity has brought protection for the newcomer, respect and support of the world outside, and security from those of us who would use A.A. for sick and selfish purposes."

When we use digital media, we are responsible for our own anonymity and for protecting that of others. When we post, text, or blog, we should consider whether we are publishing at the public level. When we break our anonymity in these forums, we may inadvertently break the anonymity of others.

For more information on anonymity online, see the pamphlet "Understanding Anonymity," the service piece "Anonymity Online and Digital Media" and the October 2010 issue of AA Grapevine on Anonymity on the Internet.

GENERAL SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES

Facebook and other social networking websites are public in nature. Though users create accounts and utilize usernames and passwords, once on the site, it is a public medium where A.A. members and non-A.A.s mingle.

The platforms in and of themselves do not infringe on our principles



MG-18 Guidelines: (excerpts)

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The platforms in and of themselves do not infringe on our principles of anonymity or any other Traditions. It is the actions of the individual that may cause harm to themselves, to others, or to A.A. as a whole. For that we are, each of us, individually responsible to our fellowship, to ourselves and to our personal higher powers. Using these platforms to provide information about anonymity online may actually strengthen the principle of anonymity at the public level.

Individual members can take clear steps to safeguard their own anonymity. For example, an individual or group might create an entirely anonymous social media account without use of their full name or face and for sharing about recovery only. Others may choose to use their names but not photographs of themselves. Both the letter and the spirit of the Eleventh Tradition are clear guideposts for our fellowship in this respect.

When it comes to the Twelfth Tradition this has proven to be something that only the individual can answer because of its foundation in humility. The following questions have proven useful tools for evaluating if our actions may or may not be in conflict with the principle described in Tradition Twelve.



MG-18 Guidelines: (excerpts)

WEBSITE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

After an informed group conscience structure is in place to decide the contents, policies and procedures involved in setting up and maintaining an A.A. website, it has been suggested that a webmaster (web manager) be appointed or elected. The webmaster is responsible to the committee or the groups served.

One area has the following experience: Their website committee is composed of six A.A.s: the web chairperson, area Public Information (P.I.) chairperson, a current district committee member (D.C.M.), a past delegate, a current general service representative (G.S.R.) and an ad hoc member. The latter three individuals are selected by the website chairperson, and their term of service is two years. In addition, a webmaster, alternate webmaster and other ad hoc members are responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the website. (Experience indicates this can be time-consuming if the webmaster is responsible for updating local meeting information.)

Some committees choose to create their own website guidelines, including: description of the site's purpose; details of the website's content; procedures for adding or removing content; committee rotation schedule; defining the difference between a website committee and a website maintenance team (e.g. webmaster and alternate); guidelines for the website committee and, if applicable, guidelines for the web team outlining its composition and responsibilities.

Responsibility Distribution

In our digital outreach, *individuals hold most of the responsibility*, emphasizing the importance of personal empowerment and the responsibility to protect both their identities and communication.

77% Individual responsibility:

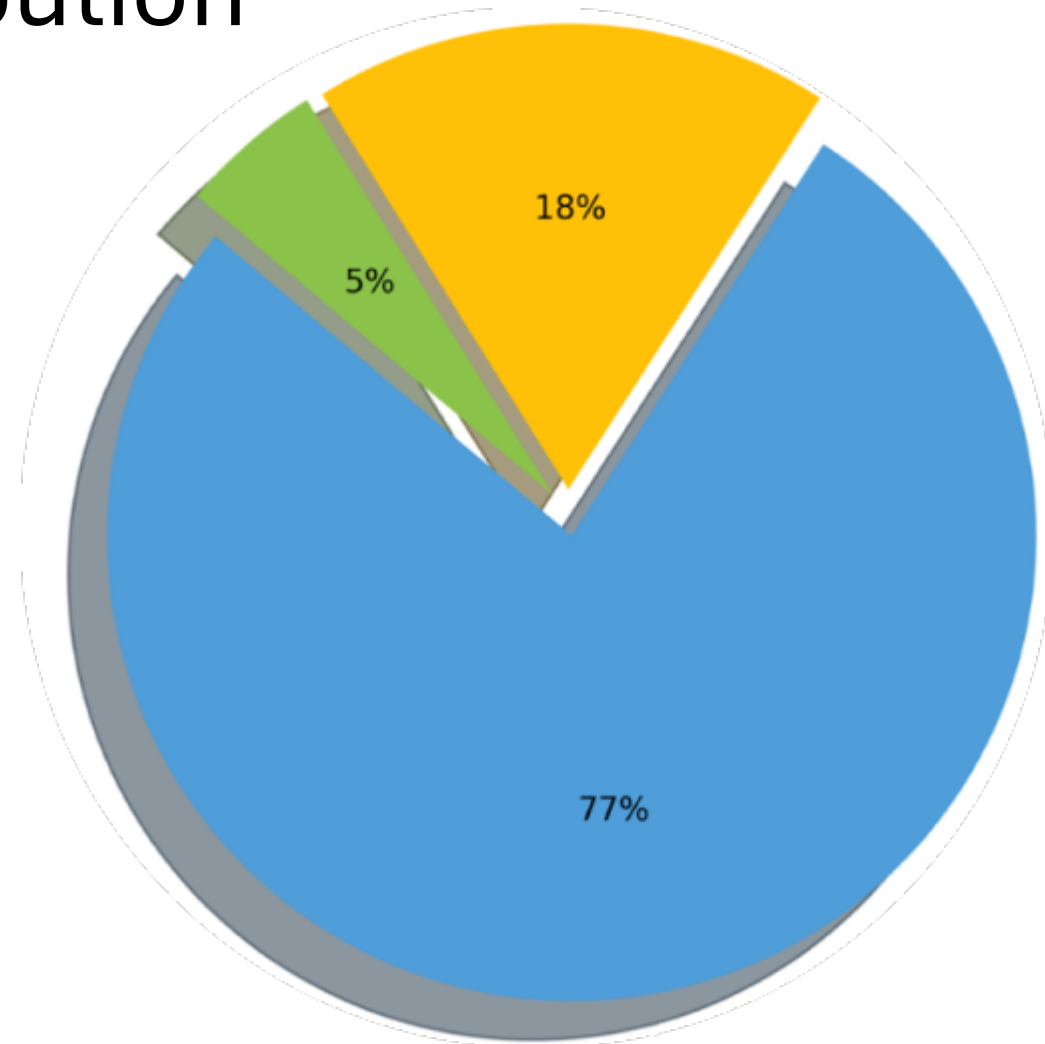
Privacy settings, avoiding controversy, respecting others' anonymity

18% Group or committee policy:

Non-affiliation, information not opinions, attraction not promotion, adhering to guidance.

5% GSO or external oversight:

Keeping each other accountable to protect AA as a whole.



Understanding roles in AA's digital outreach efforts



Take the Plunge!

We belong to Area 1 (AL and NW FL), District 12 (Mobile, Washington, and Choctaw counties). In November, we passed a motion to form a social media subcommittee and create profiles across Facebook, Instagram, X, BlueSky, and Tik Tok.

We will view the pages and then we will learn how to setup the profiles and posts to protect recovering members, and AA as a whole, through simple settings.

I am proud to say we cracked the code and it is amazingly simple.

Links to website and social media

Website	https://mobileaa.org
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/people/Area-1-District-12-Alcoholics-Anonymous/61583928391028/
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/aaarea1district12/
X	https://x.com/Area1District12
Bluesky	https://bsky.app/profile/area1district12.bsky.social

Take the Plunge!

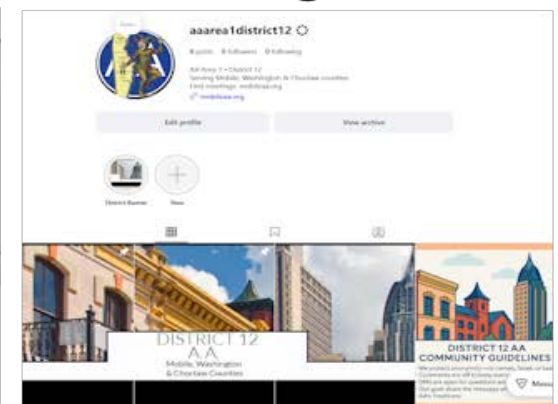
Website



Facebook



Instagram



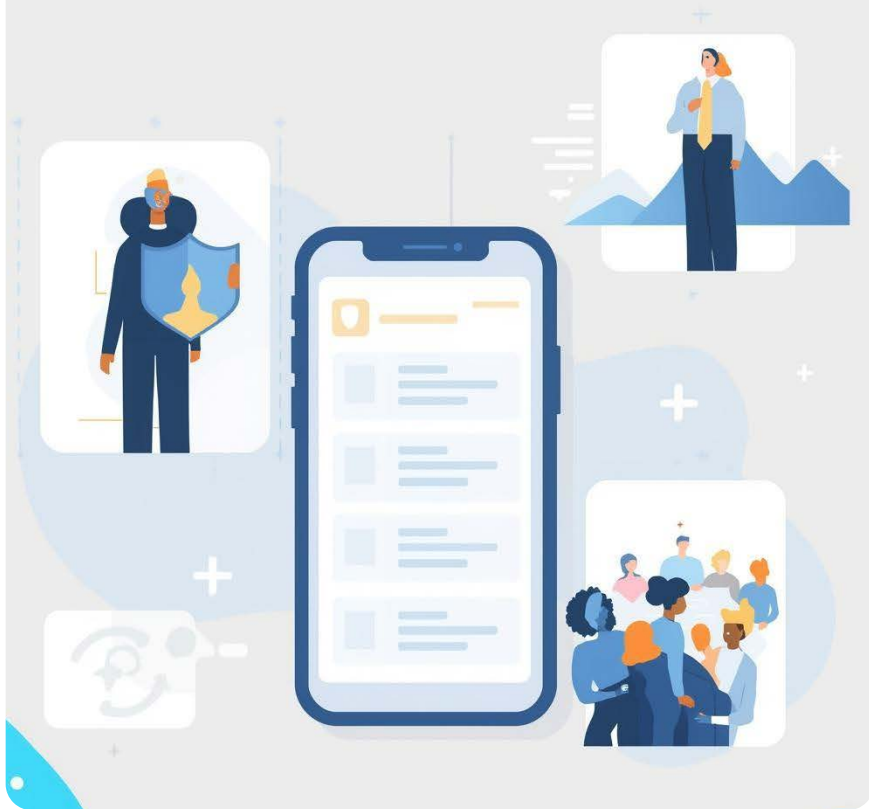
X



BlueSky



Personal Responsibility in Digital outreach



Individual Responsibility in Digital Outreach

Empowerment Through Personal Accountability

Majority responsibility in digital outreach lies with individuals. Understanding this fosters personal accountability and encourages proactive engagement within the guidelines of responsible digital communication practices.

An Area's Digital Footprint

Each platform plays a vital role in a communication network

The Area X model exemplifies responsible digital outreach through distinct platforms, ensuring alignment with MG-18 guidelines while fostering community engagement and maintaining anonymity in communication.

- Website: Information hub.
- Facebook: Community bulletin board.
- X: Conversation starter.
- Instagram/TikTok: Visual attraction.



An Area's Digital Footprint

Website → Information Hub

Purpose:

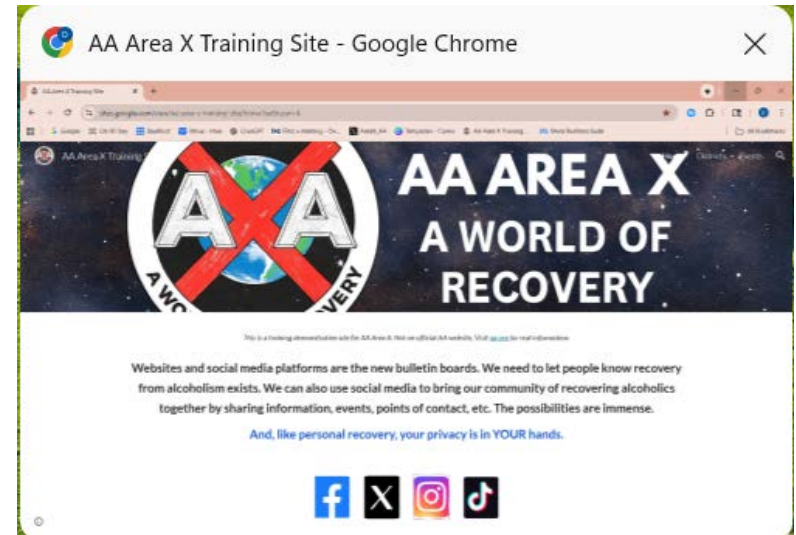
- Central source of truth for the area or district.
- Houses downloadable flyers, minutes, contact forms, and disclaimers.
- May include a **secure, login-required section** for members-only materials (e.g., internal minutes, Zoom info).

Best Practices:

- Public posts can reference Zoom links or sensitive details indirectly—direct users to the secure section to prevent bot trolling on social media.
- When posting minutes or reports publicly, **redact names, phone numbers, and personal information.**
- Use generic service emails (info@AreaX.org).

Settings:

- Enable **SSL (https)** and automatic backups.
- Keep comments/forums **off**.
- Review external links quarterly for accuracy.



An Area's Digital Footprint



Facebook → Community Bulletin Board

Purpose:

- Modern replacement for the public bulletin board.
- Promotes events, flyers, and outreach in a public, tradition-safe space.

Best Practices:

- Use a **public Page**, *not* a private Group.
 - Private groups can **tie members' profiles directly to A.A.**, risking anonymity.
 - A public page allows anyone to view or follow—no one can tell who is alcoholic or not.
- Pin a clear disclaimer post at the top.
- Post only A.A.-related announcements or service information.
- Avoid individual photos, surnames, or endorsements.

Settings:

- Turn **visitor posts off**; keep **comments on (monitored)**.
- Enable profanity and keyword filters (names, phone numbers).
- Category = “Education” or “Community Organization.”
- Assign at least **two admins** for continuity.

An Area's Digital Footprint



X → Conversation Starter

Purpose:

- Provide quick, principle-based outreach and redirect traffic to your website.

Best Practices:

- Post concise messages of hope or information, never opinion or debate.
- Quote-tweet official resources; avoid heated threads.
- Use hashtags sparingly (#AAUnity #AAService).

Disclaimers:

- Bio and pinned post example → “Do not post personal information. This is not a meeting.”
- Add brief disclaimers directly onto **images and flyers** as a visual reminder.

Settings:

- Keep DMs off.
- Limit replies to “people you follow” for sensitive posts.
- No paid promotions or ad boosts.
- Stay unverified (no blue check).

An Area's Digital Footprint

Instagram / TikTok → Visual Attraction

Purpose:

- Inspire through anonymous, visual storytelling.

Best Practices:

- Use event graphics, slogans, or literature excerpts—no identifiable faces or surnames.
- Maintain consistent colors and logo style for Area unity.
- Keep captions brief; include website link in bio.
- Infuse humor and warmth—show that recovery is joyful.

Settings:

- Public profile for visibility; disable tagging of other users.
- Moderate comments weekly.
- Add watermark or footer to clarify purpose and non-affiliation.



An Area's Digital Footprint

Digital Footprint Platform Summary

Platform	Primary Purpose	Tone & Audience	Privacy Level	Key Safeguards
Website	Information hub & document repository	Formal / Public reference	Semi-public with secure section	SSL, no comments, redacted names
Facebook	Community bulletin board for events	Friendly / Local community	Public Page (anonymous viewing)	Comment moderation, disclaimer post
X	Quick updates & conversation starter	Professional / Public	Public feed with reply limits	Pinned bio disclaimer, no DMs, no ads
Instagram / TikTok	Visual attraction & encouragement	Creative / Younger audience	Public profile with tag controls	No faces, watermarked posts, moderation

Each platform serves a *different function within one collective message*. By understanding roles and settings, we can protect anonymity, uphold Traditions, and carry the message effectively online.

Personal Responsibility (77% of MG-18)

Personal Privacy Settings & Anonymity Online

Facebook (*Personal Accounts*)

- Review **Privacy** → **Profile and Tagging** → set “Who can see posts you’re tagged in?” to *Friends* or *Only Me*.
- Set **Friends List** visibility to *Only Me*.
- Disable **Face Recognition** in settings.
- Avoid “liking” or commenting on public A.A. pages using your personal profile—use a service role account if possible.
- Use **Activity Log** → **Limit Past Posts** to retroactively restrict old public content.

X (*Twitter / X Personal Accounts*)

- Go to **Settings** → **Privacy and Safety** → **Audience and Tagging** → make sure “Protect your posts” is *on* if you want a private account.
- Disable **Photo tagging**.
- Avoid using real photos as avatars—choose symbolic images instead.
- When replying to A.A. accounts, remember visibility is public; treat replies as if speaking from the podium.

Personal Responsibility (continued)

Personal Privacy Settings & Anonymity Online

Instagram (*Personal Accounts*)

- Make account **Private** unless used for outreach service.
- In **Settings** → **Privacy** → **Mentions**, restrict who can tag or mention you.
- Turn off “**Activity Status**” (so others don’t see when you’re online).
- Avoid selfies at meetings, literature shots with full names visible, or any geotagging.

Best Practices for All Members

- Ask before posting any photo that includes another member.
- Use initials when referring to others online.
- Check every platform’s “Public Preview” to see what non-members can view.
- When in doubt, remember MG-18: “*Assume you are publishing at the public level.*”

Conclusion: Embracing Digital Outreach

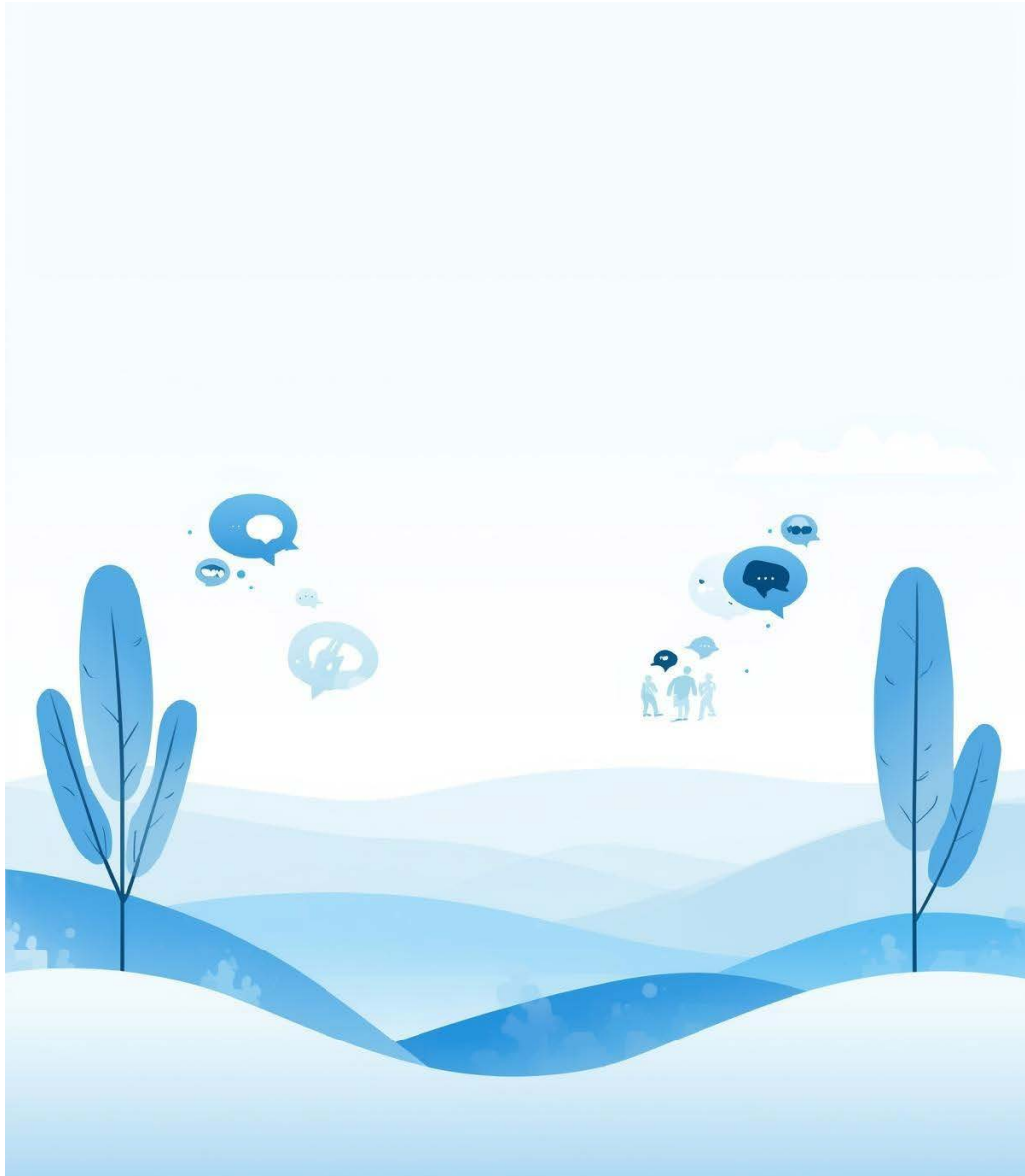
MG-18 Principles in Action



The principles of MG-18 ensure **anonymity and integrity** are upheld in digital spaces, promoting responsible outreach while allowing members to leverage technology for sharing AA's message effectively.

Embrace Responsible Outreach

To effectively apply MG-18 principles, **share what you learned** with your groups and fellow members. Encourage mindful digital interactions and promote a supportive community focused on anonymity and integrity in outreach.



Thank You

**Responsible Digital
Outreach Matters**