

AA Addresses Changing Words

Numerous OA members have contacted the World Service Office to ask if it's acceptable to change the words "alcohol" and "alcoholic" to "food" and "compulsive overeater" when reading aloud from AA literature.

Below is an excerpt of a letter from the A.A. General Service Office (dated January 22, 2010) that addresses this question:

"Although the First and Second Editions of Alcoholics Anonymous are in the public domain of the United States, it has always been Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. ("AAWS") Board's position to request the cooperation of other Fellowships based on A.A.'s Steps, Traditions, etc. in protecting the integrity of the A.A. message as conveyed in Alcoholics Anonymous. AAWS has historically permitted the adaptation of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions by other Fellowships. However, when it comes to other A.A. materials, the Board does not feel that it is appropriate for other Fellowships to substitute any other words where the words such as 'alcoholics,' 'alcoholism' appear in the original text.

"Additionally, to permit 'adaptation' of portions of text material would tend to dilute the credibility of our literature. As may be the case with some of your own literature, A.A. material derives chiefly from experience, and, therefore, possesses a certain sense of authenticity and sincerity. If the very same material were to be published with word substitutions, depending on which Fellowship was publishing it, anyone having occasion to read two or more of these versions would have good reason to doubt the integrity of any of them."

The issue of whether to change words in oral readings is a matter of respecting OA's historical relationship with AA.

