

# Public Outreach "How To" Public Service Announcements: Distributing PSAs to Local TV and Radio Stations

1. **Form a PSA committee.** Be sure to keep your Area Coordinator informed to avoid duplication of efforts.
2. **Get the committee together** with some refreshments and the **WSO PSA distribution lists.** These are the stations that will receive PSAs directly from the WSO. Area Public Outreach/Public Information Coordinators are your connection for this list. They are asked to pass this information on to Districts and Al-Anon Information Services.
3. **Compare the stations** on the distribution list with the stations listed in your local telephone directory (or Internet yellow pages) and make a list of the stations that are NOT on the WSO list. These are the "open" stations.
4. **Call the stations on the distribution list,** ask if they received the PSA, and whether they will consider putting it into their PSA rotation. *It means a lot to stations to hear from their local viewers!*  
**Note that** it does not violate Tradition Eleven to give your full name as a contact to station public service staff. They do not broadcast contact names.
5. **Call the open stations** and ask for the name and title of the person who handles PSAs (usually the "public service director" for TV or "program director" for radio). Add these "contact" names to your list of open stations. In the same call, you can ask for the contact and...
6. **Find out how to submit a PSA** for their consideration. Introduce yourself as a local volunteer and be prepared to explain a little about what Al-Anon/Alateen is. For example:

"Hi, I'm Sue Adams, a volunteer for Al-Anon Family Groups. We are a non-profit organization, providing hope and help to families and friends of alcoholics in our community. We have a PSA we would like to submit for your consideration. Can you tell me what your requirements are?"

**Smart question for TV:** *"I can provide a BetaSP format tape. Will it be possible for you to copy our tape and return it to me? I would be happy to deliver it and pick it up."*

(This can save your committee \$\$\$!!!). Note that BetaSP is a broadcast format which MOST stations can use. If you encounter a station that absolutely cannot use BetaSP, contact the WSO Public Outreach Department.

**For Radio, be sure to say:** *"We have prerecorded PSAs on a CD."*

If they say they don't air prerecorded PSAs, then say: *"We would be happy to supply you with a script and local contact information" (see sample below, and note that the PSA script is included in the CD package).*

**Closing:** *"Thank you very much for your time. May I call you back to make sure you received the tape/CD?"*

7. Use the PSA order form to obtain the PSAs needed for this project.
8. Plan the delivery of the tapes. If possible, make an appointment and hand deliver them to the Public Service Director. Just a brief personal contact can make all the difference! Include your local meeting list to reinforce that Al-Anon is available in your community.
9. For all stations, do follow up with them. Follow-up letters (mail or e-mail) or follow-up phone calls are great. Call them in a few days to make sure they received the tape/CD, and offer to provide any additional information. Ask when the station will begin airing the PSA, and be sure to thank them!
10. Send "thank you" notes to the stations that agree to air the PSAs. Stations LOVE to get fan mail! They keep these letters on file as verification of their commitment to community service. Distribute a list of station addresses in your district! See sample on next page.
11. Let your Area Coordinator and the WSO know how the PSA distribution goes!

**NOTE on RADIO:** If requested, provide the station with a PSA script and local "fact sheet" (who, what, when, where, why), including a local Al-Anon information service/intergroup (or other local contact) phone number. Example:

**Radio Public Service—Al-Anon Family Groups**

**WHO:** Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups

**WHAT:** offers free support meetings to families and friends of alcoholics

**WHEN:** weekly

**WHERE:** throughout our community (give specifics)

**WHY:** families and friends of alcoholics suffer the effects of their loved ones' drinking. Al-Anon (including Alateen for younger members) can help!

**HOW TO REACH US:** [insert local phone number and local Web site]

**Special Note on Tracking:**

Both TV (Canada and US) and radio (US only) PSAs will be electronically tracked this year!

**Sample Short & Sweet "Thank you" Note**

(This is a sample—please use your own words and share a little of your Al-Anon experience!)

Dear [insert name and title of General Manager or Public Service Director],

On behalf of Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups here in \_\_\_\_\_ (your town) \_\_\_\_\_, thank you for airing our PSA. Your continued support to help the friends and families of alcoholics is deeply appreciated. As a family member, I have found [use your own experience] in the Al-Anon Family Groups Fellowship, and am very grateful that the media is helping to educate our community on the resources available to them.

Your station's commitment to our community is commendable.

Sincerely,

(insert your name/committee)

## Report on a Successful PSA Project

Tom O. and Jim O., Co-chairs

Al-Anon Information Service Outreach Committee, Louisville, KY

We received the World Service videotapes (AV-30) and audio CDs (ACD-30). Both of us have a background and knowledge of the broadcast and print industry in the Louisville metro area, and we called on station General Managers and/or PSA coordinators in both media. The personal contact with these individuals enabled us to set up personal one-on-one meetings at their stations or offices. The concept was to personally share our Al-Anon story, and to briefly explain Al-Anon and its purpose as a program to help families of alcoholics. Also, the media people were asked directly to assist us by giving permission for the tapes to be aired at their convenience, as frequently as possible. This effort would not have been successful without the personal contact and direct "ask" for a commitment. Many managers and assistants appreciated the short, concise overview of the Al-Anon program (They're busy people, and brevity is important). Several acknowledged problems with alcohol abuse within their families, friends, or staff members.

A great majority of our AIS group both saw and heard TV and radio PSAs immediately after our personal calls on the media managers, and continued to mention "PSA sightings" six months later on some of the highest rated stations in the market. As a result of this initiative, our own group had an attendance growth of 25% after the PSAs had begun. We could only assume that all of the 75 meetings in the metro Louisville area had increases as well.

We recommend, if possible, finding an Al-Anon member with knowledge of the communication industry who would be willing to participate. If such a member is not readily available, certainly other willing members can make the personal contact with media decision-makers, respectfully asking that the PSAs be given some air-time as soon as possible.

Members in our area were asked to write or call the General Managers or PSA coordinators on the stations airing the Al-Anon spots to thank them for their support. We received positive feedback from GMs and their assistants about the calls and notes they had received. The "Thank You" notes were both unexpected and appreciated by them, establishing a positive reception from them when we went back a year later begging for more Al-Anon air-time.

It worked in Louisville. It can work everywhere else.

## PSA Fact Sheet

- Al-Anon has produced public service announcements for over 20 years.
- You may view the current PSA on our Web site ([www.al-anon.alateen.org](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org), click "MEDIA"). The TV PSA you purchase from the WSO is broadcast quality which means it can only be viewed using special equipment that TV stations use.
- Our PSAs are produced in English, French, and Spanish.
- Our newest English PSA appears in these lengths: 60, 30, and 20 seconds. All Spanish and French versions include 60 and 30 second lengths.
- Enclosed with each PSA purchased from the WSO:
  - TV: For the stations:** tape package containing: BetaSP videocassette; letter from the WSO Executive Director; storyboard (includes the script and sequential images); and a business reply card
  - Radio: For the stations:** CD with current PSA; letter from the WSO Executive Director; announcer copy (a script that an announcer may read if they prefer to do their own spots); and a business reply card.  
**Note** that all three languages are included on every CD; the letter and reply card are translated when ordering French or Spanish versions.
- **TV Format:** the format we have in stock is BetaSP. The technology continues to evolve and currently there are other formats that we do not stock. If a station absolutely cannot use BetaSP, please contact the WSO with their format request. We will continue to produce whichever format is most widely accepted.
- **Don't forget your local cable outlets!**
- Radio and TV stations receive many, many PSAs each week and there are numerous worthy organizations competing for free airtime. A phone call, a personal visit, a letter, or e-mail may call attention to our PSA!

*Thank you for supporting this ongoing, important project!*