

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your email. We are aware of the issues around trying to connect to some of the phone meetings. Many phone carriers have blocked their customers' access to no-cost conference call services because it costs the carriers a lot of money when their customers dial in to them. Almost all of the phone meetings are held on such services because the cost of using the for-pay conference call services would be prohibitive. Many of the large Canadian carriers such as Bell Canada were among the first to block these calls, but people in other countries have had the same problems. Some of the largest US carriers are following suit—AT&T, for example.

Some OA members have asked if OA could host the phone meetings, and unfortunately that is not an option for several reasons. First, OA is a Twelve Step program, not a phone company. Tradition Six states “An OA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the OA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.” Another reason is cost—OA cannot afford to pay commercial fees for conference call services. One phone meeting that often has 170 members on the line would cost over \$300 for a 1-hour meeting. The final reason is liability—just as the World Service Office would not allow OA groups to meet on their premises, neither can they “host” phone meetings without assuming an “agency” role and the subsequent liability if someone were injured.

Here are a few things you may try:

- Contact your phone carrier and politely ask them to unblock the phone number. Some people have found that their carrier was willing to work with them.
- Try different meetings - you may be able to dial into some but not others.
- Switch to another phone carrier.
- Use phone calling cards. Make sure there are no restrictions on those - many “charge” more minutes for international or in-state calls. Shop around for the best rates – online sites may have cards for as little as 3 cents per minute.
- Use a voice-over-Internet provider's telephone service – for example, Skype or Google Voice.
- Try online or Skype OA meetings if you have a computer - they are listed on the OA Web site.
- Attend local face-to-face meetings in your area, or if there aren't any, start a new group - information on how to do so is available on the OA Web site.

We hope you will find some or all of these possibilities helpful.

Yours in service,

Virtual Services Committee