



# Professional Trade Shows Manual

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OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS, INC.



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## Section I – Local Trade Show Considerations

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Exhibits and booths at local professional conferences and conventions offer additional opportunities to share OA's message. At such gatherings we can educate many professionals at one time by speaking to them directly when they visit the OA booth. Remember, we never present ourselves as professionals or experts in the field of food addiction, nor do we affiliate ourselves with sponsors of the conference or other exhibits. We are there to distribute information about Overeaters Anonymous, and member volunteers are asked to speak only in that capacity and to their own recovery.

### How to Locate Local Trade Shows

Below are some resources for locating trade shows in your area.

- **Local Convention and Visitors Bureau:** Most cities have a convention and visitors bureau which provides information on upcoming events. If your city does not have a bureau, consider contacting your local chamber of commerce. Some bureau's websites offer a calendar of events that lists upcoming professional conferences and conventions for the year. If the website doesn't offer a calendar of events, call your bureau and ask for one.
- **Internet Searches:** The internet has a wide variety of information on upcoming trade shows. Simply choose a search engine and type in the keywords for what you're looking for. Suggestions for keywords are "medical conferences," "obesity conferences," or you can search for more specific trade shows such as "nurse conferences" or "family physician conferences." The more specific your keywords, the better chance you'll have locating the right kind of trade show.
- **Professional Newsletters, Journals, and Associations:** Your local library or searching the internet can provide you with a list of these types of resources. Refer to Appendix A for a list of suggested professional associations. Refer to Appendix B for a list of suggested professional categories.
- **Region Trustee Liaison or Region Chair:** Contact your region trustee liaison and/or region chair for information on upcoming trade shows in your area.

### Choosing Criteria for Local Trade Shows

After researching the local trade shows in your area, you may want to select criteria when choosing the trade show. Below are criteria to consider.

- **Target Audience:** Which groups do you think would best receive and carry our message of recovery to compulsive eaters who are still suffering?
- **Trade Show Theme:** Are any speakers on the agenda discussing symptoms of compulsive eating, such as bingeing, purging, starving, or obesity? Is it Twelve Step oriented? Audiences are more receptive if the agenda includes professionals who already recognize our illness and recovery program. It is just as important to inform the many professionals who are unaware of the OA program or who have misconceptions about OA.
- **Other Exhibitors:** What types of exhibitors have participated in the event? Are most exhibitors demonstrating products rather than discussing services? Trade shows with

mainly product-oriented exhibits do not need to be avoided but consider booth location carefully. Inquire with the trade show as to other twelve step organizations that are exhibiting and consider placing the OA booth in that location. ***Note: Some trade shows offer nonprofit rates and have a nonprofit section for exhibiting.***

- **Number of Attendees:** If this trade show has been held in previous years, how many people have attended in the past? What are the expected numbers this year? A larger audience is not always a better audience but gives a better “yield” for the booth cost, and numbers may help you decide between the two trade shows. Expected attendance also impacts how much literature to order and its cost. Be aware that event organizers can inflate their projected attendance figures, sometimes drastically.
- **OA Meetings:** Is it possible to hold an OA meeting with visitors (open) at the trade show for professionals to attend?
- **OA Podcasts and Website:** Is there a location and time available to show the OA podcasts or demonstrate the OA website? Is rental equipment available?
- **Location:** Are enough local volunteers who exhibit a healthy body weight available to staff the booth? Is OA strong enough in the location to provide support and serve a variety of new members? Have you or any other OA service body exhibited in this city recently? If so, you may want to choose another trade show in another city.
- **Dates:** Do the dates conflict with regional meetings, with any other OA events or holiday, including religious holidays that might cause difficulties recruiting volunteers? Will the hours make it difficult for OA volunteers to attend?
- **Cost:** Consider your service body’s budget. Try to get the best value for the dollar but look for “hidden costs.” Many trade shows require union fees for booth setup, teardown, and electricity. Be sure to ask if they offer rates for nonprofit organizations. Complete a budget sheet to analyze all costs. Refer to Section III for budget considerations.
- **Exhibitor Space Requirements:** What is the size of the exhibit space? What is included in the exhibitor’s registration fee? Are rentals available for tables, chairs, audio visual? Will the trade show provide a sign in the exhibit space? Does your region or a nearby intergroup/service board have an OA display for loan? Can you setup the display yourself? Are adequate display materials available?
- **Shipping:** Will the display and/or supplies need to be shipped in advance? Will you need to use the trade show’s official shipping company?

## Section II – Exhibitor’s Prospectus and Service Manual

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Professional conferences and conventions provide an exhibitor’s prospectus to those organizations interested in exhibiting. Download the exhibitor’s prospectus from the organization’s website or call the organization directly and request an exhibitor’s prospectus.

### Exhibitor’s Prospectus

The exhibitor’s prospectus provides the information you’ll need when selecting the criteria for a trade show. Below is a list of common information found in the exhibitor’s prospectus.

- Location, date(s), and time(s) of the trade show
- Attendance numbers and profiles
- Conference theme
- Conference/trade show agenda
- List of previous year’s exhibitors
- Booth costs, requirements, regulations
- Exhibit space application and floor plan
- Marketing and advertising opportunities (*Note: OA does participate in some marketing and advertising opportunities if it is not endorsing the event. An example would be including an OA pamphlet in the event’s registration materials. A cost may be involved.*)
- Expo company contact information

### Exhibit Space Application

Review the exhibit space application in its entirety. The application will provide information on space deadlines and fees, cancellation deadlines and fees, as well as space regulations. Keep in mind that most trade shows have early bird specials and nonprofit rates. If a nonprofit rate is not listed on the application or in the prospectus, consider contacting the professional conference to request a nonprofit rate. A deposit may be required at the time of application and may not be refundable after a certain date.

If information is missing from the application form, your application may be delayed or denied. Please make sure to include all the pertinent information as well as the required payment.

Once your application is accepted, you will be contacted to confirm your payment and booth assignment.

### Exhibitor’s Service Manual

Approximately three to four months out from the trade show, an exhibitor’s service manual will be emailed to you. *Note: Some professional organizations require the exhibitor to download the service manual.*

Exhibitor's service manuals can be very lengthy and time consuming. It is important to read everything in the manual. If you're not sure about some of the information, contact the exposition organization.

Below is a list of common information found in an exhibitor's service manual.

- **Expo General Information:** This can include the purpose/scope of the conference/trade show; general regulations for exhibiting; insurance requirements; contractual considerations such as cancellation, security, liability; booth information; booth construction; signage; utilities; shipping; materials handling; labor; exhibitor setup and teardown dates and times; expo contact information; floor plan; and a list of current exhibitors.
- **Registration and Housing Information:** This can include information on how to register as a conference attendee and as an exhibitor; what is included in the exhibitor's registration fees; and housing information (hotel rates, guest information).
- **Promotional Opportunities:** This can include opportunities to sponsor special events during the conference/trade show; sponsor educational sessions; sponsor the registration bag. *Note: OA does participate in some promotional opportunities if it is not endorsing the event. An example would be including an OA pamphlet in the event's registration materials. A cost may be involved.*
- **Exposition Company Information:** The professional conference hires an exposition company to handle all the exhibitor logistics such as shipping, materials handling, labor, cleaning, furniture. This section of the manual can include shipping information (advance shipments and direct shipments); booth package information; installation/dismantle dates and hours; show hours; trade show tips; show contact information; show worksite rules; and expo company terms and conditions.
- **Shipping and Labor Information:** This can include expo shipping services; materials handling information; freight questionnaire; shipping and labor order forms; special handling; storage information; and shipping labels.
- **Furnishings:** This can include furniture and materials available; carpet information; custom exhibits and information; and cleaning information.
- **Convention Center Services:** Since most trade shows are held at a convention center, the convention center is typically union operated and only allows union workers to provide specific services. The exposition company cannot provide these types of services. These services can include catering and hospitality; electrical; internet; and business center (copying, printing, equipment rental). Remember that each convention center is different and may include additional services. Make sure to read your service manual for convention center requirements.
- **Other Vendors:** Certain types of services are outsourced to other vendors. These types of services can include lead retrieval systems/apps; audio visual; computer equipment rental; floral arrangements; and photographic services.



## Exhibitor's Service Manual Considerations

After reviewing the exhibitor's service manual, consider the following:

- **Discount Deadlines:** Most exposition companies establish discounted rates if materials are purchased by the designated deadline date. When reviewing the service manual, make sure to look at the discounted deadlines. After the deadline, costs can be much higher. ***Note:** Deadline dates may be different from the exposition company and the convention center.*
- **Booth/Display Shipments:** Most trade shows allow for advance (warehouse) and direct (trade show site) shipments. If time allows, consider shipping the booth/display (if you own/borrow a booth/display) in advance (warehouse) to save shipping costs. Advance and direct shipments have a range of dates for shipments. The advance shipments allow for an approximate one-month range of shipments (e.g. between June 15 and July 15). Direct shipments allow for one to two weeks range of shipments (e.g. between June 15 and June 22). Direct shipments normally require a two- or three-day service depending on where the booth/display is being shipped, which is considerably more expensive.
- **Materials Handling:** If the booth/display is shipped, there are fees for materials handling. Make sure to contact your shipping company to find out times for delivery. Materials handling rates are based on standard, overtime, and weekend rates. ***Note:** Most expo companies will not charge handling fees if the service body can transport the materials by hand to the trade show floor. Be sure to check with the exposition company first.*
- **Union:** Most convention centers require union labor for installation/dismantle of booths/displays, electricity, labor. It is important to read the manual carefully to see if union labor is required. ***Note:** Most popup and tabletop displays can be setup in thirty minutes; union labor is normally required to setup displays/booths that take more than one hour.*
- **Return Shipments:** There can be hidden costs when returning the booth/display. The exposition company will charge for transporting the booth/display (materials handling) from the trade show floor to the shipping dock of the convention center. It is important that these costs are considered in addition to the costs to ship the display.
- **Packages:** When reviewing the service manual, check to see if there are furniture packages, cleaning packages, and carpet packages. Some exposition companies will discount these items if the package is purchased. A furniture package can consist of one 6' skirted table, two plastic chairs, and a wastebasket. Be sure to check what furniture is included in the booth registration fee before purchasing this package. If these items are purchased separately, the costs will be significantly higher. The same applies to carpeting and cleaning.
- **Carpeting:** The service manual will provide you with the color of the carpeting placed in the common areas (aisles) of the trade show hall. The exposition company does not provide carpeting in the booth space. When ordering carpeting, try to stick with the same color as the exhibit hall common areas so the carpet transitions well.
- **Convention Center/Other Vendors:** When exhibiting at a convention center, the exposition company may not have any control over the purchase of certain items (e.g. audio visual, floral arrangements, lead retrieval systems). Make sure when completing these forms, they are sent directly with payment to the convention center or outside vendor.
- **Lead Retrieval System/App:** A lead retrieval system is an electronic scanner or an app that scans attendee's contact information and then either prints out the information,

provides the information on a thumb drive, or emails the information directly to the address specified, depending on the service purchased.

## Onsite Considerations

The following items have been suggested for onsite use.

- Create a notebook for the booth to include schedule of volunteers and times scheduled, volunteer contact information, local meeting lists, and instructions for volunteers.
- Provide a clipboard or app for volunteers to tabulate the number of visitors per day.
- Provide a clipboard or app to record any observations or questions that need additional research.
- Provide note pads, pens, and a rack or some type of display for literature.

## Section III – Budgeting for a Trade Show

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There are several resources for funding a trade show: service body, Professional Exhibits Fund, reduced cost literature, and contributions. Below are considerations when budgeting for a trade show.

### Budgeting at the Service Body Level

The following items are normally included in an itemized estimate for exhibit costs.

#### Expenses

Costs	Estimate	Actual
Exhibitor Registration		
Shipping (exhibit booth/display and literature)		
Booth Labor (install/dismantle)		
Rental Equipment (carpeting, cleaning, audio visual)		
Literature		
Program Listing		
Hotel, if necessary		
Meals, if necessary		
Transportation and Parking Fees		
Miscellaneous		
Supplies		
Telephone		
Postage		
Lead Retrieval System		
<b>TOTAL</b>		

#### Income

Costs	Estimate	Actual
Intergroup/Service Boards		
Region		
Professional Exhibits Fund		
Other		
<b>TOTAL</b>		

### Professional Exhibits Fund

In 2005, the Board of Trustees created a special fund to help service bodies participate at health-related professional conferences and conventions that might otherwise be too costly. These events are attended by professionals such as doctors, nurses, family practitioners, and nutritionists. This fund is supported by OA members' and service bodies' contributions. ***Note: The PE Fund does not provide funding for health fairs. A professional trade show is not a health fair. Professional***

*trade shows target professionals whereas health fairs target the general public. The Professional Exhibits Fund is available for professional tradeshow.*

### **Professional Exhibits Fund Allocation Procedures**

Applications shall be evaluated in the following manner.

- Applications are due to the World Service Office the 10<sup>th</sup> of every month and shall be evaluated monthly with consideration given first to national and international trade shows and then to regional trade shows.
- Applications will be sent to the committee on the 15th of each month.
- The committee shall convene a consensus meeting to deal with the applications received within seven days of receipt.
- Service bodies shall be informed of the committee's decision within three days of that meeting.

Consideration will be given for the following expenses listed on the Professional Exhibits Fund application, provided there is funding available and request includes a brief explanation of need for such expenses.

- Booth fees
- Production of signs for the booth display
- Professional presentation folder cost (15 percent of the expected attendance for shows under 2,000 attendees and 5 percent of the expected attendance for shows over 2,000 attendees)
- Professional presentation folder shipping fee
- Copy expense for handouts
- Meals at per diem rate based on city where professional exhibit is held, and volunteer hours are such that require meals
- Accommodations for overnight stay if required and there is no local OA volunteer available from a service body in the area of exhibit to provide local accommodations
- Mileage at current rate as set by OA, Inc.
- Parking fees
- Reimbursement for travel expenses (including meals, lodging, parking, etc.) shall be limited to a minimal number of volunteers and shall be at the discretion of the committee
- Exhibitor badge fees

In the spirit of Seventh Tradition of self-support, it requested that—where feasible—each applicant service body be provided some portion of these expenses from their available local treasury or regional treasury.

If funding is approved, a report to the Professional Tradeshow Committee shall be submitted within thirty days after the event which includes: the number of attendees, approximate number of attendees stopping by the exhibit booth, number of packets distributed, what worked and what could be improved, any lessons learned, whether or not the service body would recommend a repeat attendance, and any other information about the experience which might be helpful.

Refer to Appendix C for the Professional Exhibits Fund application information.

## Reduced Cost Literature

Service body public information/professional outreach committees may purchase literature through members of the Board of Trustees at a reduced cost when participating in health fairs/professional exhibits or for distribution to professional groups. The region trustee liaison's budget will be charged for the order if the service body doesn't pay for it.

The reduced cost shall be calculated to be the higher of either:

- the actual cost of the literature, or
- 50 percent of the retail price.

Literature shall be shipped, and the actual cost of shipping shall be added to the order. ***Note: Reduced cost literature should be used to purchase above and beyond what the Professional Exhibits Fund has awarded the service body.***

Refer to Appendix C for the Reduced Cost Literature application information.

## Section IV – OA Volunteers

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Choose a responsible, organized, and committed OA volunteer to coordinate the trade show. The coordinator should recruit abstinent volunteers who demonstrate recovery on all three levels (spiritual, emotional, and physical) and who are maintaining a healthy body weight.

It is important to remind volunteers that “we are a program of attraction.” Volunteers should be well versed in our Twelve Traditions, Twelve Concepts, and the OA service structure. For that reason, we recommend that volunteers be current or former trustees, region chairs, or region board members.

### Organizing Participation at Trade Shows

- Arrange a schedule to staff the booth. The booth should be staffed by at least two people. This allows volunteers to take breaks and still have the booth occupied (e.g., one volunteer takes a fifteen-minute break while the other covers the booth and vice versa). Orient and educate volunteers on dress, what to say, and types of professionals attending. Refer to the exhibitor’s service manual as to the amount of complimentary registrations (normally two or four). Also refer to Appendix D for Volunteer Orientation Guidelines for Trade Shows and Appendix E for Questions Frequently Asked by Non-OA Members. It is suggested that volunteers receive a copy of the guidelines before the event. Also keep a separate copy of both appendices at the booth for easy reference.
- Volunteers designated as registrants are to understand that their first obligation is to the booth. It reflects well on OA when the booth is staffed adequately always. Trade show sponsors may be able to tell you in advance what times to expect the most traffic through the trade show hall and what times are slow. Although OA is nonprofessional, volunteers dressed in business attire add credibility to the message. Depending on lengths of shifts, volunteers may want to wear comfortable shoes as many trade shows are held on concrete floors with nominal padding. Inquire about the conference’s policy on seminar attendance and other conference activities by trade show volunteers. Then inform all volunteers whether they are eligible to attend any of the conference seminars.
- A good way to reach trade show attendees is to hold an OA meeting with visitors (open) every day/night, if appropriate. Ask the exposition company well in advance for a meeting room and time, and request that both the room and time be printed in all program material. Publish the meeting time in local OA newsletters and invite members to attend and support the meeting, if allowed by the exposition company. ***Note: There may be additional costs for meeting space.***
- Showing OA’s website and podcasts can be very effective. Check your exhibitor’s service manual for audio visual equipment and internet costs.
- Order literature no later than two months prior to the trade show. Refer to Appendix F for suggested literature. ***Note: It is recommended that literature be purchased at 15 percent of the expected attendance for shows under 2,000 attendees and at 5 percent of the expected attendance for shows over 2,000 attendees.*** The World Service Office has combined literature into a professional presentation folder that can be purchased through

the OA bookstore, reduced cost literature program, or can be applied for through the Professional Exhibits Fund.

- Trade show exhibitors are also often professionals we want to reach. Whenever possible, encourage extra volunteers to visit other booths when activity on the floor is slow. This provides an opportunity for us to introduce OA to those who are not able to leave their stations, and for the OA volunteers to learn more about other organization's presentations.
- Anyone interested in additional OA information should leave their contact information (through the lead retrieval system or a business card). Indicate next to their name if the attendee would like to receive a professional kit.
- At the end of the day, secure the bulk of the literature and supplies. Leave some literature and other applicable information out for those who prefer to visit the booth when it is unattended. ***Note: Check with the exposition company to see who has access to the booths after show hours.***
- A volunteer evaluation form is provided in Appendix G for feedback and suggestions for future trade shows.

## Section V – Closing the Trade Show

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The OA member responsible for coordinating the trade show and volunteers should also oversee closing out the trade show. Experience has shown that it is a good idea to have at least two volunteers scheduled for the closing. Below a list of suggestions for closing a trade show.

- If literature was secured through the Professional Exhibits Fund, inventory the literature and contact the World Service Office with this information. If necessary, arrangements will be made to ship the remaining literature back to the World Service Office. Returned literature will be credited to the fund.
- Collect the volunteer evaluation forms and compile the information for a final report.
- Submit a final report to the World Service Office within thirty days after the event with the following information: name, date, and location of trade show; the number of attendees; approximate number of attendees stopping by exhibit booth; number of packets distributed; what worked and what could be improved; any lessons learned; whether or not the service body would recommend a repeat attendance; and any other information about the experience which might be helpful.
- Follow up with any professionals that requested additional information. Contact the World Service Office if a professional is interested in receiving a professional kit.
- Reconcile all expenditures and reimburse volunteers where appropriate.



## Appendix A – Professional Associations

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The following is a partial list of professional associations. An asterisk (\*) indicates OA's suggested primary target groups.

- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics\*
- American Academy of Diabetes Educators\*
- American Academy of Family Physicians\*
- American Academy of Nurse Practitioners\*
- American Academy of Nursing\*
- American Academy of Physician Assistants\*
- American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing
- American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
- American Association of Medical Assistants
- American College of Nurse Practitioners\*
- American College of Physicians\*
- American Correctional Association
- American Correctional Health Services Association
- American Counseling Association
- American Dental Association
- American Diabetes Association\*
- American Heart Association\*
- American Hospital Association\*
- American Nurses Association
- American Obesity Foundation\*
- American Physical Therapy Association
- American Psychological Association\*
- American Public Health Association
- American Public Human Services Association
- American Society for Nutrition
- American Women's Medical Association\*
- America's Essential Hospitals
- Association for the Improvement of Mental Health
- Association of American Medical Colleges
- Association of American Physicians and Surgeons
- Association of Chiropractic Colleges
- Canadian Cardiovascular Society
- Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association
- Canadian Medical Association\*
- Canadian Nurses Association\*
- Employee Assistance Professionals Association
- International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors
- John Howard Association
- Kiwanis
- Lions and Lionesses
- National Academy of Medicine
- National Association of Community Health Centers
- National League of Nursing
- National Medical Association\*
- Pri-Med
- Rotary
- Society for Human Resource Management
- Soroptimist International
- Southeastern Psychological Association
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration\*
- World Health Organization
- World Obesity Federation

## **Appendix B – List of Suggested Professionals**

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The following is a partial list of professionals to target for outreach work. An asterisk (\*) indicates OA's suggested primary target groups.

### **Health and Human Services**

- Alcohol/Drug Abuse Counselors\*
- Allergists
- Case Managers
- Chiropractors
- Dentists
- Dieticians\*
- Discharge Planners
- Doctors\*
- Eating Disorder Counselors\*
- Family Counselors
- Health Club Managers
- Hospital Administrators
- Marriage Counselors
- Medical Librarians
- Medical Students\*
- Nurses\*
- Nursing Students\*
- Nutritionists\*
- Occupational Therapists
- Physical Directors
- Physicians Assistants
- Primary Care Physicians\*
- Psychiatrists\*
- Psychiatric Nurses\*
- Psychologists\*
- Public Health Administrators
- Social Workers
- Welfare Care Workers

### **Clergy**

- Ministers
- Pastoral Counselors
- Priests/Nuns
- Rabbis

### **Educators**

- Diabetes Educators\*
- Public Librarians

### **Business Community**

- Employee Assistance Counselors\*
- Labor Management Consultants
- Personnel Consultants

### **Judiciary**

- Judges
- Lawyers

### **Correctional Facilities**

- Assistant Wardens of Programs
- Corrections Clinical Psychologists
- Corrections Officers
- Directors, Wardens, or Administrators
- Parole Board Members
- Parole Officers
- Police Officers
- Prison Chaplains
- Probation Officers
- State or Local Medical Directors

**Institutions**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Correctional facilities at the local, county, state, and federal levels</li><li>• Eating disorder units and treatment facilities*</li><li>• Educational institutions (i.e., colleges, technical schools)</li><li>• Employee assistance programs*</li><li>• Family counseling or service agencies*</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hospitals*</li><li>• Mental health centers*</li><li>• Nursing homes</li><li>• Referral information or other mental services</li><li>• Retirement centers</li><li>• Substance abuse and recovery centers*</li></ul>
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## **Appendix C – Professional Exhibits Fund and Reduced Cost Literature Applications**

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To download the interactive applications, go to [oa.org/document-library](http://oa.org/document-library) and select Category: Outreach to Professionals.

## Appendix D – Volunteer Orientation Guidelines

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- Remember that we are a program of attraction. With respect to appearance and attitude, please dress appropriately in a business fashion. Be hospitable to all those with whom you speak. This includes other exhibitors, whether you agree with their ideas or not. Do not engage in debate with people of differing views.
- Please do not eat or chew gum at the booth. Do not wear stickers or buttons from other booths, so we will not violate our tradition of non-affiliation.
- Do not use your cell phone in the booth. If you must make or receive a call, please step out of the booth and walk to an area of the trade show floor that allows you to speak freely, such as the concessions area.
- When answering questions, remember we are not professionals and are not expected to be authorities on medical, psychological, or nutritional topics concerning compulsive eating. When questions are asked about the disease rather than the OA program, give intelligent answers that do not conflict with our amateur status. To inform yourself, refer to OA Conference-approved literature. Do not hesitate to say, “I don’t know,” or “I’ll try and get the answer you requested and get back with you if you wish to leave me your name and number/email address.” When speaking to professionals, it is suggested that you refrain from sharing your story or pictures unless asked.
- Look alert and interested in what you are doing. Attendees will be attracted to stop and see our exhibit by your smile and friendliness. Let people know you are ready and willing to speak with them—make eye contact. Look at their name tag, call them by name, and use an opening greeting such as, “Are you familiar with Overeaters Anonymous?” or “Do you work with compulsive overeaters?”
- Refer to the fact that OA is a Twelve-Step, Twelve-Tradition program patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous. This will answer a lot of questions.
- Don’t engage in a lengthy conversation with an attendee, especially if there is a line.
- Don’t ignore a booth visitor even if you are already in conversation with someone else. Acknowledge their presence and indicate you’ll be with them shortly.
- Do not interrupt other volunteers when they are speaking to an attendee.
- If you state an opinion of your own, remember to say that—that is your opinion and not representative of OA as a whole.
- You will be speaking to professionals. Let them know that OA does not want to replace them. We wish only to complement them and act as an adjunct to their services.
- Offer the attendees literature after you have spoken with them. Sometimes literature can be a conversation stopper.

## Appendix E – Questions Non-OA Members Frequently Ask

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- **What is compulsive eating?** Compulsive eating is a progressive illness which cannot be cured but can be arrested. Compulsive eaters are “driven by forces we don’t understand to deal with food in irrational and self-destructive ways” (*Questions and Answers*).
- **How does OA work?** The Twelve Steps are the heart of the OA recovery program. They offer a new way of life that enables the compulsive eater to live without the need for excess food. Members who make an earnest effort to follow these Steps and to apply them in daily living get far more out of OA than those members who merely come to meetings and don’t do the serious emotional and spiritual work involved in the Steps (*Questions and Answers*).
- **What are the Twelve Steps?** The ideas expressed in the Twelve Steps, which originated in Alcoholics Anonymous, reflect practical experience and application of physical, emotional, and spiritual insights as recorded by thinkers throughout many ages. Their greatest importance lies in the fact that they work. They enable compulsive eaters to lead happy, productive lives. They represent the foundation upon which OA has been built (*Questions and Answers*).
- **How does a person join OA?** No one “joins” in the usual sense of the word. There are no membership applications to fill out. Those who believe they have an eating problem may join simply by attending meetings (*Questions and Answers*). The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively (Tradition Three). If you feel you are one of us, we welcome you with open arms (*Many Symptoms, One Solution*).
- **Can men join OA? What about young people? Does OA accept bulimics or anorexics?** (See Tradition Three and the Preamble.) Yes. All who struggle with compulsive food behaviors are welcomed in love and fellowship. Overeaters Anonymous supports each person's effort to recover and accepts any member who desires to stop eating compulsively. When individuals ask about medical matters, OA always recommends they seek professional advice. The Third Tradition states, “The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.” Nothing else is asked or demanded of anyone. The acceptance and practice of the OA recovery program rests entirely with the individual.
- **How did OA start?** OA was founded in Los Angeles, CA, on January 19, 1960, with an initial meeting of three compulsive overeaters. Our founder, Rozanne S., was assisted by the founder of Gamblers Anonymous in applying the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous to our particular compulsion (*OA Handbook for Members, Groups, and Service Bodies*). From that first meeting, OA has grown until today there are thousands of meetings throughout the world.
- **Why are OA members anonymous?** Anonymity allows the Fellowship to govern itself through principles rather than personalities. Social and economic status have no relevance in OA; we are all compulsive eaters. Anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public media of communication provides assurance that OA membership will not be disclosed (*About OA*). Anonymity at the most basic level says we don’t disclose the identities of individual members, their personal situations, or what they share in confidence at meetings, online, or on the phone with us. This makes OA a safe place where we can be honest with ourselves and others (*Questions and Answers*).

- **What does membership in OA cost? How is OA supported?** There are no membership dues or fees. Most local groups “pass the basket” to cover the group’s expenses and to support our service bodies (*Questions and Answers*).
- **Are there many men in OA?** Based on a 2017 survey of members around the world, 13 percent of members identified as male.
- **Can young people join?** Yes, sometimes they attend meetings open to all who have a desire to stop eating compulsively and sometimes they attend special meetings targeted for teens and young people. A pamphlet for young people can be obtained from the World Service Office.
- **Does OA work for everyone?** OA, like AA, works for those who work the program. “Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path” (*Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition*, p. 58).
- **Are all OA groups alike?** The essence of the program is the same, but some groups are more structured and disciplined, while others are more individualized. They vary in size, demographics, recovery profiles, and formats. Where possible, newcomers are encouraged to attend several different meetings to find what works for them.
- **Is OA affiliated with any other organizations?** No. OA is not affiliated with any other organizations of any sort. (*OA Handbook for Members, Groups, and Service Bodies*).
- **Is OA religious organization?** Overeaters Anonymous has no religious requirement, affiliation, or orientation. The Twelve Step program of recovery is considered spiritual because it deals with inner change. OA has members of many different religious beliefs as well as some atheists and agnostics.
- **Does OA recommend a particular diet?** OA is not a diet club, and we do not endorse or recommend any particular plan of eating. While OA does make available to its Fellowship a pamphlet which contains sample food plans OA members have chosen as plans of eating (*A New Plan of Eating*), OA members are free to follow the food plan of their choice. It is strongly recommended that the members contact a health care professional before embarking on any particular plan of eating. The OA program works, not by following a particular food plan, but by working the Twelve Steps.
- **How does OA support itself?** OA is entirely self-supporting through membership contributions and literature sales. No outside donations are accepted. Most local groups “pass the basket” at meetings to cover the cost of rent, literature, meeting expenses, and to support OA as a whole. Meetings keep enough money to meet their own expenses and send the balance to their intergroup or service board, their region office, and the World Service Office. The financing of OA service bodies depends on these regular contributions from meetings.
- **How much do you have to weigh to qualify for OA membership?** OA works for almost anyone who wants to stop eating compulsively, no matter what size the individual may be. Some people who come into OA have already attained a healthy weight, while others may be underweight. We turn to OA to find a way of life where we can live comfortably without returning to compulsive eating habits. There are as many degrees of weight as there are OA members, ranging from underweight or normal weight to those who have hundreds of pounds/kilograms to lose. Whatever our weight, all who have a desire to stop eating compulsively have equal advantages in coming to Overeaters Anonymous. Our common bond is stated in Step One: “We admitted we were powerless over food—that our lives had become unmanageable.”

- **What is the profile of an average OA member?** For statistical questions, see the *Membership Survey Report* in the Document Library at oa.org. In OA, you'll find members who are morbidly obese, extremely or moderately overweight, average weight or underweight, still maintaining periodic control over their eating behavior, or unable to control their compulsive eating. The only requirement for membership in OA is a desire to stop eating compulsively.
- **What is OA's position regarding "X"? Tradition Six:** 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. **Tradition Ten:** Overeaters Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the OA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
- **How is OA organized, and who is in charge?** OA is truly unusual in that it has no central government and a minimum of formal organization. It has no officers or executives who wield power or authority over the Fellowship of individual members. In even the most informal organization, however, certain jobs obviously need to be done. For example, in local groups someone must arrange for the meeting place, account for the group finances, make sure adequate OA literature is available, and stay connected with the local, regional, and international service centers. On the international level, people must be responsible for the maintenance and smooth functioning of the World Service Office. All of this means that OA at the local, regional, and international level needs responsible people to perform certain duties. It is important to understand that these members perform services only. They make no individual decisions and issue no individual judgments affecting other groups or OA as a whole. Persons who accept these responsibilities are directly accountable to those they serve, and service jobs periodically rotate among members.
- **How can I find OA in my neighborhood?** Provide the oa.org website, local phone numbers, and your service body's website.



## Appendix F – Suggested List for Literature

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The following literature is sent out by the World Service Office in a professional kit when responding to professional inquiries. A standard kit is composed of the following:

- Cover letter from the World Service Member Services Department
- *Professional Presentation Folder*, which includes *When Should I Refer Someone to OA?*, *Compulsive Overeating: An Inside View*, and *Membership Survey Report*
- *In OA, Recovery is Possible*
- *OA Members Come in All Sizes*
- *Is Food a Problem For You?*

Specialty pamphlets, if needed, are added to the standard kit in the front of the packet.

- *A New Plan of Eating*
- *Fifteen Questions*
- *The Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*

The *Professional Presentation Folder* can also be purchased through the OA bookstore, reduced cost literature program, or applied for through the Professional Exhibits Fund.

## Appendix G – Volunteer Evaluation Form

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Please fill out this form and place it in the envelope provided. Your comments and suggestions are requested for future participation in these types of trade shows.

Day \_\_\_\_\_ Hours Worked \_\_\_\_\_

What was the general response at OA's exhibit? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

About how many people did you talk to that DID NOT want additional information? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you recommend OA's participation at this event again? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you do anything differently if OA participated at this event again? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Was sufficient literature available? ☐ Yes ☐ No

In your opinion, did the booth meet the needs of the trade show attendees? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If not, what would you suggest as an improvement? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Overall comments, suggestions, or stories you would like to share. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_