



# CoDA Teen Starter Packet

## Carrying the CoDA Message of Recovery to Teens

How do we “carry the message” of recovery to teen-agers? Many CoDA members share the wish of knowing about CoDA when we were younger. We are powerless over the past. Today, we can choose to support young people in recovery from codependency.

### 1) An Adult CoDA Meeting Can host a Teen Meeting— Here’s How

- Hold one or more group conscience meeting(s) to determine if there is sufficient support within your group to host a CoDA Teen meeting.
- Review the CoDA service item titled “**Requirements for Adults Who Are Teen Meeting Hosts**” during a group conscience meeting. (Included in this Teen Meeting Starter Packet and available online: [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org))
- Determine if there are two people in your group who fit the requirements for hosting a Teen meeting. Please be aware that for safety’s sake, these are requirements, not guidelines.
- When possible, it is best to have one female and one male host at a co-ed Teen meeting. It is best that the two hosts not have a marital/romantic/sexual relationship with one another. If a man and woman are unavailable, two people of the same sex may serve as hosts. Ideally, the adult meeting would be able to provide a qualified substitute host when the regular host is unavailable.
- Get in touch with your local Police Department to see what procedures they use to check individuals (hosts) who will be working with Teens. They may take fingerprints and/or check their records.

- Determine if there are funds available to pay for rent and some CoDA literature in order to start the Teen meeting. An adult CoDA group may financially support a Teen group, if necessary, within the scope of Tradition Seven.
- We suggest stocking welcome chips and *Establishing Boundaries* pamphlets for the Teen meeting, plus other materials that Teens choose. (A literature order form is included in this packet and is available online: [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org))
- Reserve a room in the same building as the adult meeting, at the same time, for the Teen meeting. Or, set a time after school. These options decrease the transportation difficulties that Teen attendees may face.
- Set a start date.
- Register the meeting with CoDA Inc. Teen Meetings are registered as CLOSED, meaning that only Teens can attend meetings. The only adults allowed at Teen meetings are the hosts. (Register online [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org) or postal mail using the meeting registration form included in this packet.)
- Announce the CoDA Teen meeting to attract Teen members. Appropriate announcement forms, based on “attraction rather than promotion” (Tradition Eleven) are included in this packet and are available on the website [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org)

Suggested places to announce meetings are:

Local schools and teen centers  
Guidance counselors and treatment centers  
Local newspapers  
CoDA meetings  
On the CoDA website  
Video or music stores, movies, bowling alleys, etc.

## 2) A CoDA Community Group or Region Can Start A Teen Meeting.—Here’s How

If your CoDA Service Community wants to host a meeting for Teens, follow the process #1, above, which pertains to a regular CoDA Meeting Hosting a Teen Meeting.

The main difference is selection of the Teen meeting location. The Community needs to decide where the best location would be for Teens. Among the considerations are:

Where: Is the location accessible? How might Teens get there?

Will it be adjacent to – or near – a regular CoDA meeting within your region?

When? What is the best time for Teens? When are the hosts available?

### **3) Two Adult CoDA Members Can Host a Teen Meeting— Here's How**

If there is no adult meeting or Regional service body to sponsor a Teen meeting, two individuals may start and support a Teen meeting. There are important considerations under these circumstances.

- Can the hosts commit to the Teen meeting without the extra support from a CoDA group? Is there a back-up plan if one or both adult sponsors are unavailable for a meeting?
- All requirements for Teen Meeting Sponsors apply when individuals start and support a Teen meeting.

### **4) A Group or Community can Host an Informational “Panel”**

CoDA members/groups can participate in community events by providing CoDA literature and / or a speaker. Community events take place at community centers, hospital health fairs, teen centers, schools, etc. It's a great way to get the word out about CoDA Teen and CoDependents Anonymous. You can check with your local teen centers, social service agencies, hospitals and town nurse to find out if they are holding appropriate events.

### **5) Host a Teen Event at your Convention or Conference**

If your community is holding a convention or conference, consider hosting a CoDA Teen meeting there. Make announcements at adult meetings that there will be activities and meetings for teenagers at your event. This way, adult CoDA members know to bring their teen to the conference. It provides an opportunity for family interaction and recovery. It's a great way for families to grow together in recovery.

## **6) Online Meetings for Teens**

Teens are not always able to get out to a meeting when they need to share. The Fellowship of CoDependents Anonymous is looking into the possibility of online Teen meetings. Ideally, an online meeting would not be a replacement for a face-to-face meeting, but an adjunct to a Teen meeting.

For updated information about online meetings, check the website: [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org)

### **Are There Differences Between CoDA Teen Meetings and “Regular” CoDA Meetings?**

There are many more similarities than differences. CoDA Teen is based on the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of CoDA. The CoDA Teen meeting format is the same as, or similar to, CoDA’s suggested meeting format. CoDA Teens make meeting decisions based on the group conscience process.

Teen members, through their group conscience process, can decide if they want to allow attendance by an adult member other than the regular hosts, for special purposes. For example, a CoDA member may be available to share experience, strength, and hope relating to teen issues. An adult CoDA member may be available to hold a CoDA-related workshop for CoDA Teens. These decisions are made by the teens, not the adult meeting hosts. Aside from these special circumstances, CoDA Teen meetings are CLOSED to adults, except for the hosts.

### **What is the role of meeting hosts in CoDA Teen meetings?**

CoDA Hosts model appropriate adult behavior for the Teens by arriving on time, communicating directly with each other and the group, being good listeners, using "I" statements, encouraging Teens to take on service roles, and supporting the Teens in their recovery process.

Hosts are role models for the Teen members through their interactions with each other and with the Teens themselves. They show recovery through their actions; i.e. letting go of control, using the Steps in their lives, turning to their Higher Power for guidance, and trusting the process as the Teens make decisions using the group conscience process.

### **Requirements for Adults Who Are Teen Meeting Hosts**

Each CoDA Teen meeting needs support from adults, called “Hosts.” Hosts are trusted servants who remain active in their own recoveries. There are special concerns about meetings for minors; the CoDA Service Conference considered these in a group conscience.

At the CoDA Service Conference, a loving Higher Power, as expressed through the group conscience, established the following **requirements** for adults who wish to participate in sponsoring Teen Meetings.

**Meeting Hosts Are:**

- Willing and able to share the Experience, Strength and Hope of CoDA recovery.
- Healthy role models for teens and supportive of teens in recovery.
- Patient.
- Good listeners who allow Higher Power to work in the Teen Meeting.
- Aware that CoDependents Anonymous is not suited for emergencies, potential injuries to self or others, fighting, etc. In an emergency, the host can call 911 or police.
- Working the Steps and following the Traditions in their own CoDA recovery.
- In contact with the nearest CoDA Community, Regional or Intergroup Service organization.
- Able to commit to Teen service for at least six months.
- Trusted Servants.

**Also, CoDA Teen Meeting Hosts:**

- Are in consistent CoDA recovery, having attended meetings regularly for at least one year, preferably longer.
- Continue to attend adult CoDA meetings regularly.
- Have worked the Twelve Steps in CoDA.
- Have experience using the Twelve Traditions in CoDA service work.
- Are familiar & have personal service experience with the group conscience decision-making process.
- Are sober and drug-free for a minimum of one year, preferably longer.
- Are willing to be fingerprinted and have a criminal record check by the police.
- Are at least 21 years old.

**Hosts have great responsibilities working with teens. Appropriate boundaries require that hosts not engage in any of these behaviors with Teens:**

- Sexual contact of any kind. This includes verbal, emotional, or physical seduction, implied contact, flirting or any other behavior that could be construed as sexual in nature.
- Manipulation, exploitation or threatening any Teen.
- Showing anger inappropriately by yelling, raging, swearing.
- Controlling the Teen meeting.
- "Caretaking" or "fixing" CoDA Teen members.
- Providing therapy, counseling or professional services of any kind.
- Business relationships of any kind with any Teen member.

## Safety Considerations When Dealing With Minors

Minors are vulnerable to deviant authority figures such as adults with inappropriate sexual boundaries, including sexual predators. For this reason, many regions/states require that adults who participate in activities with minors be fingerprinted. CoDA Inc. requires this of all Teen Meeting Sponsors. In addition to being fingerprinted, hosts may need to undergo a background check.

## Suggestions for High School CoDA Teen Meetings

Some schools allow groups to meet inside the school. It helps if there is a CoDA parent who can speak with the school or district.

The success of the meeting depends on the support of the counselors, teachers, staff, and teen or community centers in the area.

Teen Centers, religious buildings, and hospitals are other good places for a CoDA Teen meeting. However, transportation may be difficult if there is no public or school transportation.

Having the meeting immediately after school may ensure higher participation.

Meeting announcements can be posted in classrooms, auditorium, school bulletins, or other viable resources approved by CoDA and the school.

Meetings generally start off small. Some of the teens are not sure what to share or how to say it. Safety, trust and confidentiality are issues that need to be addressed.

Some suggestions to help engage the teens are:

- Have a guest speaker
- Use the *Establishing Boundaries* pamphlet
- Read and discuss excerpts from the *CoDA Book*
- Use the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Workbook
- Use the self-evaluation tools (characteristics of codependency) to open the sharing

Not all teen meetings can be financially self-supporting, but the members should be given the opportunity to donate as they can.

Try to remember what it was like to be a teenager!

To give your meeting the best chance for success, work the Steps in your own recovery, follow the Traditions to help resolve group issues, and reach out to your CoDA community for help.

### Suggestions for teen/young adult meetings on a college campus

Colleges and universities sometimes provide rooms for Twelve Step programs. Speak to the Community Service Division at the college. The school probably has regulations that need to be followed order to hold a meeting on campus. For instance, colleges generally require that meetings be posted, including the meeting time and place.

If the school says you must become a “club” in order to meet there, look for another space. Being a club, with a membership list, violates Tradition Twelve: “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions...”

Sometimes a faculty member needs to be responsible for the space. The faculty member does not need to oversee the meeting, but needs to sign for liability purposes. It may help to involve a faculty member from either the Psychology or Sociology department.

A college may require that on-campus meetings be open to all members of the school community, including staff and faculty. If that is the case, the CoDA Meeting Sponsors and/or CoDA community need to make a decision about whether to start a meeting that is open to faculty and staff as well as students. If they want a CLOSED meeting, for students only, an alternative off-campus space needs to be located.

To give your meeting the best chance for success, work the Steps in your own recovery, follow the Traditions when making group decisions, and reach out to your CoDA community for help.



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