

SCA-NY Electronic Communications Policy (May 2020, v1.3)

Section 1.0 - Statement of Purpose

Coping with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic (5/2020) has increased SCA's reliance on technology solutions to help carry its message to the sexual compulsive who still suffers. We use these platforms, but our usage does not constitute an endorsement.

The disappearance of face-to-face meeting spaces and the groups they hosted has created a vacuum. The social distancing rules have created for many a sense of isolation, and intense loneliness for some. Disconnection and isolation are catalysts for our disease. To address this situation, our trusted servants have utilized a video-conferencing platform called Zoom™ to enable a “virtual” set of meetings.

However, to implement this process, it is now necessary to communicate with our membership on a whole new level. This communication has involved messages to and from the fellowship via email and phone.

The program needs certain basic procedures and guidelines to protect the anonymity, privacy, and security of these exchanges. The purpose of this policy is to document best practices and procedures for electronic communications, both with the existing fellowship and newcomers.

Section 2.0 – Email Communications

SCA quickly discovered that posting the live links to our virtual meetings on our web site created security issues, notably the practice of “Zoom Bombing,” where non-members would “crash” the meeting and use it as a platform for hateful speech and images. Since it was no longer possible to “pull” this vital information from the web site, it needed to be “pushed” to those who wanted to participate.

Our trusted servants in charge of Technology and Inreach developed and implemented a “vetting” process. This process utilizes a “contact form” on our web site <https://scany.org>, whereby SCA gathers basic information before replying with the needed access information.

The gathered information includes hundreds of email addresses, stored in secure areas of the various technology platforms we utilize (JotForm, WIX, and Gmail), separate from the public areas accessible to the world. The collection of this data

presents several issues for the fellowship: how can it be used, how long should it be retained, and how can we empower our members to control access to their data. There has been one (1) incident of a member who received a message about an upcoming SCA event that they felt was a violation of the sixth Tradition, as well as their privacy. Using the features available, they were able to “opt-out” of any further communications.

In response, SCA added a disclaimer to the vetting process. Future members who sign up for the current meeting information must now agree to receive announcement emails from the program related to SCA-sponsored events, as well as meeting changes. Since SCA presently has no face-to-face meetings, these emails represent SCA-related announcements. SCA added the text in the next section to the form.

Section 2.1 - Collection of Email Addresses – Anonymity & Usage

The text below is the current email disclaimer for members registering to receive meeting information:

By providing your email address, <https://scany.org> will send a response, including current online meeting information. We may also send periodic emails regarding meeting changes, both online and in-person. In exchange, you agree to allow scany.org to send occasional email messages about scany.org hosted events. You may opt-out at any time: however, you will then no longer receive updates regarding meeting time/date/link changes.

SCA will not use collected email addresses for any other purposes. You may “opt-out” of this mailing list by following the instructions located at the bottom of any received message.

Messages sent to scany.org can sometimes contain Personally Identifiable Data (PID), including last names. Some email systems (e.g., Gmail) frequently add PID to what are otherwise anonymous accounts (i.e., the address does not contain last names) by attaching the full name based on the profile information provided by the account holder. If the anonymity of the email account is critical to the account holder, such holder is responsible for ensuring that the profile(s) associated with the account has no PID.

Email retention/usage follows the spirit of the ISO’s Privacy Policy.

Section 2.2 – Email Disclaimer for Outside Speaker Events

If/when SCA’s trusted servants organize an SCA special event that includes an outside speaker or other non-member participation, the email sent to the distribution list must contain a 6th Tradition disclaimer. Doing so makes it clear that even though SCA is *hosting* the event on its Zoom™ platform, it does not affiliate nor lend its name to the person(s) who may be speaking and does not endorse or oppose their positions. A sample text preface to any such email might be:

SCA-NY is hosting this event on its virtual zoom platform in response to requests from its membership for access to third-party speakers with experience in dealing with sexual compulsion.

However, in keeping with the 6th Tradition, SCA-NY does not endorse the guest speaker, their opinions, or statements and is not in any way affiliated with them. SCA-NY has no opinion on the merits or deficits of any aspect of the presentation.

Members are encouraged to develop their own opinions about the material and to take what they like and leave the rest.

Section 3.0 – SCA Hotline Confidentiality Procedures

Currently (5/2020), the “hotline” is answered by a small group of volunteers using a distributed voice network implemented with Google Voice™. A single number, listed on our literature and web site, is transferred to several individuals’ cell phones. This arrangement helps to ensure that calls are answered directly, without the need for the caller to leave a message.

This policy attempts to describe the procedures and best practices for performing this vital function. Questions addressed include what to say to individuals who seek our help, as well as what procedures to follow if they do not reach a live person and leave a message for a callback.

When speaking directly, please encourage your caller to attend a meeting. You may answer their questions and talk briefly about your experience, strength, and hope using the SCA program. However, then focus your conversation on meetings—sharing what they are like and which ones you would recommend. By attending meetings, newcomers can see for themselves whether SCA is right for them.

If a caller asks about non-SCA resources, such as other 12-Step fellowships, therapists, self-help groups, poison control or suicide “hotlines,” etc., please do not get into an extended conversation. These are outside issues, and SCA has no opinion about them. Some of our members may use such resources, but SCA will not make any suggestions to recommendations about any such services.

At present, there are no face-to-face meetings, so some introduction to Zoom™ virtual meetings needs to be readily transmitted. This information might be a stock text message that volunteers can send at the push of a button, containing a link to one (or more) Zoom meetings with instructions on how to participate. Alternately, we can direct them to fill out the contact form on our web site designed for that purpose.

If the caller does not reach a live volunteer directly, the outgoing voicemail message should be informative and explicit in its content. While many variations are possible, the following text represents an example of such a message (SCA-NY Intergroup approved the text in May 2020):

Thank you for calling Sexual Compulsives Anonymous New York. Our general information, including a meeting list, is available on our website: www.scany.org. If you want us to call you back, please leave a voicemail using your first name only, followed by a phone number, and indicate whether we can leave a message. If you have a question but do not wish us to call you back, please consider sending an email to info@scany.org. We will reply to your message as soon as we can. Thank you.

If leaving a message on a caller’s voicemail, we recommend discretion, not mentioning the name SCA or Sexual Compulsives Anonymous, unless the caller provides specific consent to do so in their message. An example might be:

“This is John, returning your call to our organization requesting information. Please call us back at <hotline number>.”

The committee may adopt the following helpful suggestions from SLAA’s protocols for their phone service volunteers. Take what you like and leave the rest.

1. DO NOT give out your name (other than first) and NEVER your phone number;
2. During the process of the call, give them a brief description of what SCA is and does (the Opening Statement on the Four-Fold is a useful resource), and direct

them to our website, <https://scany.org>, for further information and to obtain meeting access information.

3. Always encourage callers to attend a meeting and to see for themselves. Remind them that they are not required to speak, sign-in, or otherwise identify themselves (except to receive Zoom™ log-in information). SCA has no dues or fees. Our only requirement for membership is a desire to stop having compulsive sex.
4. When talking to people on the phone, be careful not to engage:
 - A. It is not a meeting;
 - B. It is not a time for getting current. Calls should rarely last more than a few minutes unless the person is having difficulty understanding the basic information;
 - C. If you begin to feel triggered or uncomfortable, tell them you'll have someone else return the call;
 - D. If triggered after a phone call, try doing centering things:
 - a. Use the Serenity prayer;
 - b. Make a call to a sober SCA member;
 - c. Talk to your sponsor;
 - d. Repeat positive affirmations.
6. Be warm, friendly, and encouraging. Emphasize the benefit of experience, strength, and hope in the recovery community, breaking out of the isolation.
7. When returning a call and getting someone other than the original caller: ask to speak to the person who called. Often people will pry into the reason for your call. Simply say: "I'm returning a call: if [Name of person] is not in, I'll call back." Do NOT leave a call back number. Often people have not shared their problems with spouses/others in their home. We must respect their anonymity.
8. We DO NOT refer partners to meetings. If you reach someone who is looking to get help for someone else, a partner or a friend, tell them that the individual must make the phone call.

Section 4.0 – Media Inquiries

Academics and media outlets source some calls to the “hotline” or emails to info@scany.org, occasionally requesting a person to interview about SCA. Some of these requests include “on-camera” interviews. SCA-NY Intergroup recommends that no one is to go on camera to speak about their experience with SCA unless measures are in place to obscure their identity, in keeping with SCA’s Eleventh and Twelfth Traditions.

If a volunteer agrees to speak with those outside the fellowship, they must begin their remarks by affirming that they do not speak for SCA, but are only describing their personal experience in the program. Anonymity and independent expression are necessary whether the entity is a media outlet or an academic doing research.

In sharing our experience, strength, and hope with those outside the fellowship, we must use “I” statements, keeping the focus on ourselves, and taking great care not to refer to SCA as holding beliefs or taking positions on outside issues. A nonchalant statement in such an interview might damage SCA as a whole, against the wisdom of the Fourth and Tenth Traditions.

Whenever possible, fulfilling requests for such interviews should be at the discretion of SCA-NY’s Outreach Committee.

Section 5.0 – Electronic Donations/Tax Records

SCA-NY Intergroup is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation. As such, contributions to SCA-NY Intergroup are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. SCA-NY will provide official receipts on its letterhead for calendar-year donations of \$250 and above. Such receipts for tax purposes will need to include the legal name and address of the donor. Those who choose to remain anonymous may still use the records of their donations to claim on tax returns. To request an official donation receipt for any amount over \$250, please send an email to treasurer@scany.org.