

### *Can newcomers join A.A. outside their own community?*

This question is sometimes raised by persons who seem to have perfectly valid reasons for not wanting to risk identification as alcoholics by any of their neighbors. They may, for example, have employers who are totally unfamiliar with the A.A. program and potentially hostile to anyone who admits the existence of a drinking problem. They may wish desperately to be associated with A.A. as a means of gaining and maintaining sobriety. But they may hesitate to turn to a group in their own community. The answer to the question is that a person is free to join an A.A. group anywhere he or she may choose. Obviously, it is more convenient to join the nearest group. It may also be the most straightforward approach to the individual's problem. The person who turns to A.A. for help is usually, but not always, pretty well identified as a drunk. Inevitably, the good news of this person's sobriety is bound to spread, too. Few employers or neighbors are likely to resent the source of their worker's or friend's continued sobriety, whether it centers in a local A.A. group or one located fifty miles away. Few people these days are fired from their jobs or ostracized socially because they are sober. If the experience of many thousands of A.A.s is a reliable guide, the best approach for the newcomer is to seek help in the nearest group before beginning to worry about the reactions of others.