



Becoming a Secular Sponsor

After you've been in OA for a while and chalked up some abstinence and are working the Steps, you might start thinking about becoming a sponsor. This is perhaps the most committed service position you'll ever have, and the one that can help your own program and your OA community the most. When you're a sponsor, you're a role model. You don't have to be perfect, not by any means, but working with sponsees is often an incentive to work a stronger program for yourself. It's an opportunity to keep studying the Steps on a regular basis and to learn from someone else's perspective. Your main tasks are to listen and to share your experience, strength and hope, and as one sponsor said, "My job is to be a loving witness."



"My main job is to be a loving witness."

How do you know you're ready?

You don't need a certain length of time in OA or to have finished all the Steps or even years of perfect abstinence, but you should have some solid recovery. It's also a good idea to ask your own sponsor to see what they think.

Often, people will approach you first—they'll be attracted to how you work your program and your recovery. OA says, "Sponsor up to the level of your own ability." So, for instance, if you have some recovery and are working on Step 4, you can be a temporary sponsor for a newcomer who is working Steps 1-3. You can also let others know you're available by raising your hand during meetings or by putting a note in the Chat or on the meeting list.

How is secular sponsorship different?

Probably the main difference between secular and traditional sponsorship can be the use of "outside" literature and alternative Steps to supplement OA readings. Many secular OA members are triggered by OA literature and all the "god-talk" and spirituality. Using outside resources can help translate the OA 12-Step abstractions into meaningful concepts (e.g., collective wisdom for God or self-awareness for spiritual awakening). Encouraging sponsees to attend at least one secular meeting is also helpful; there's an extra level of comfort in being with others who share a similar viewpoint.

When you are ready

We've identified some good resources to support you as you become a sponsor. And don't forget, one of your most important resources is, of course, your own sponsor!

Secular Overeaters Resources

You can find these resources and more at <https://secularovereaters.org>

Podcast: Secular Sponsor Speaker Series

Listen to recordings of secular sponsors as they describe how they work with their secular sponsees. The series covers many topics, from Food Plans to working some of the Steps.

<https://secularovereaters.org/so-sponsor-speaker-series/>

Secular Newcomer Information

FAQs and secular newcomer brochure.

<https://secularovereaters.org/so-newcomers/>

Secular Sponsoring

Sponsoring secular sponsee resources.

<https://secularovereaters.org/so-sponsoring/>

Working the Steps

Alternative Steps and outside literature.

<https://secularovereaters.org/so-working-the-steps/>

The Twelve Step Workbook of OA: Secular Translations

Rewritten God questions from the OA workbook. Add your own versions!

<https://bit.ly/SO-OA-WorkbookQuestions>

Free OA Resources

A Guide for Sponsors

OA brochure with practical sponsoring tips and little god-talk! Currently available to mail to US addresses.

<https://forms.gle/fDsvS5cPMBsDBPQLA>

A Sponsor's Toolbox (pdf)

Lots of great, mostly secular, tips on how to sponsor.

<https://oa.org/app/uploads/2021/08/a-sponsors-toolbox.pdf>

Sponsorship

A quick overview.

<https://oa.org/working-the-program/sponsorship/>

Temporary Sponsors: Newcomers' First Twelve Days

<https://oa.org/app/uploads/2021/08/temporary-sponsors-newcomers-first-twelve-days.pdf>

The Balanced Sponsor/Sponsee Relationship

A letter from the OA Board of Trustees outlining limitations and boundaries of sponsee/sponsor relationships (2017).

<https://oa.org/app/uploads/2021/08/the-balanced-sponsor-sponsee-relationship.pdf>

Podcasts

Questions about sponsorship? Listen to "Sponsorship Success": a nine-part podcast series by members from various regions sharing their experience, strength, and hope with using the Tool of sponsorship.

<https://oa.org/sponsorship-success/>