

# Anchorage Alaska Bed & Breakfast Association

## Volunteer Hotline Training and Manual



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## AABBA

### HOTLINE RULES

1. While in possession of the hotline telephone, all hotline volunteers commit to answering the phone at all times between 7:00 AM until 9:00 PM.
2. To answer the hotline telephone, all volunteers must have strong, understandable English language skills.
3. Once assigned, members may not trade dates with another member B&B without first contacting the hotline chairperson.
4. If three or more complaints are received during the calendar year regarding any volunteer or member B&B's participation in the hotline service, such as but not limited to telephone etiquette, inaccurately posted availability, or non-response to guest inquires, hotline privileges will be revoked.
5. There will be periodic monitoring of the hotline by the hotline committee. Any volunteer found to be practicing "forced sales" of their B&B by including theirs as a choice contrary to the caller's profile for amenities and location, not referring other member B&Bs, or referring non-member B&Bs will lose their hotline benefit for the balance of the calendar year.
6. Your hotline calendar **must** be updated at least once **weekly** and every time your availability changes during the season. Prior to passing the hotline to a new volunteer, calendars that are dated older than one week will be removed.
7. New member inquiries are to be referred to the Membership Chairperson. Requests for information are to be referred to the Hotline Chairperson. Complaints are addressed in the next section.

### PROPER HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED ON THE HOTLINE

The hotline phone may from time-to-time receive complaints about B&Bs. These calls may be about an Association member; however, it is more likely that they will be complaints about non-members. It is not your responsibility to comment about complaints whether it is regarding a member or non-member.

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### Non Member Complaints

Explain to the caller that the B&B is not a member of the Anchorage Association and refer them to the ACVB. The number for the ACVB is 276-4118.

### AABBA Member Complaints

Please lend a sympathetic ear for a few minutes then:

1. Assure them that complaints are handled appropriately by the Standard and Ethics Committee; however, they must be documented in writing either through the website or through the US Postal Service.
2. Refer the caller to the Association website where comments and complaints are documented.
  - a) Direct the caller to the “Inspected and Approved” tab
  - b) Then the “Guest Comments” tab
  - c) Then “Standards and Ethics” link at the end of the last paragraph.
3. Give them the Association address to mail a complaint.

P.O. Box 242623, Anchorage, Alaska 99524-2623.

Please remember that it is not your responsibility to resolve a complaint. The Standards and Ethics Chairperson will be responsible for the matter once the complaint has been received in writing.

Do not discuss complaints with other B&B owners. Complaints are **never** sent via the Association broadcast email at [members@anchorage-bnb.com](mailto:members@anchorage-bnb.com). Please notify the Standards and Ethics Chairperson of the call details.

Thank you for your discretion in this sensitive matter.

## EMAILING CALENDARS

1. Members maintain their booking calendars in a current and legible status.
2. From May 1 until October 1 please email you calendars to the current volunteer at least once weekly and then again anytime you have new bookings.
3. From October 1 until May 1 please email your calendars at least once and then every time your availability changes.
4. The information you enter on your calendar must be legible and must contain the **date** and **area by number**.

➤ Downtown	1
➤ Midtown	2
➤ East	3
➤ Airport	4
➤ Hillside	5
➤ South	6
➤ North	7

5. If you are closed or on vacation, please email a calendar with a note stating when you will return or reopen.
6. Always assure that you calendars include your minimum number of nights requirement and Hickel House donated nights.

## HOTLINE BOOK

The Hotline Book travels with the phone and charging unit. It is divided into several sections. Every section divider has important phone numbers and other information.

### Hotline Section Arrangement

- The instructions for using the cell phone
- Referral Call Log

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- Hotline Referral List
- Pets Accepted and Handicap Accessible B&B List
- Availability Calendars by Area
- Hickel House Donation Instructions and Pledge List on reverse side
- Members by Area with room count and phone number
- Board of Directors and membership phone list
- Associate Members Detail
- Association History & Operating Philosophy
- Printed copy of Hotline Instructions
- New Monthly Call Lot Sheets
- New Monthly Hotline Referral Log Sheets
- Used call log sheets

And... just in case you didn't know - the following can be obtained direct from the Association website at [www.anchorage-bnb.com](http://www.anchorage-bnb.com):

- Hotline Instructions
- B&B and Associate Membership Information
- Hotline Volunteer Schedule
- Downloadable Calendars in Adobe and MS Excel Formats

## **EXCHANGING THE HOTLINE PHONE**

- The new volunteer contacts the current volunteer on Saturday to arrange a time to transfer the phone on Sunday. If you have not received a call by early evening on Saturday, call the new volunteer.
- The new volunteer picks up the phone on Sunday as agreed.
- Before leaving make sure the phone is not on forward and ask if there are any missed calls or messages that need to be responded to.
- Always make sure you have checked for any last minute calendars that have arrived.
- Keep the phone DRY – wet phones do not work!

## **ARRANGING THE CALENDARS**

- The new volunteer rotates the area section by removing the top section and

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places it at the back of all the sections. The next section in sequence will now be on top. This rotation will allow all sections to routinely be on the top of the list.

- The new volunteer reviews the calendars and removes any calendars that are more than seven (7) days old.
- Calendars without dates are automatically removed.
- Calendars that are illegible are automatically removed.
- New emailed calendars are placed in the proper section of the book (replacing the outdated calendar which you discard).
- Referrals are evenly and fairly distributed.
- Keep your online calendar and paper calendar updated with the same information.

## **ANSWERING THE PHONE**

- Press the GREEN answer button.
- Answer the call using a professional greeting. If you have forwarded the phone to your home or cell number you should answer generically until you know if the caller is calling you or the hotline. This is very simple by answering with “B&B, this is (your name), may I help you. The caller will then ask if this is (the B&B name) or the B&B Association or just “hotline”.
- Begin the interview process

## **THE INTERVIEW PROCESS**

- Always ask how the caller found the hotline number. Record the answer on the Hotline Referral List. This will help determine the value of past and future marketing efforts.
- Always ask the most important question: “Do you have transportation?”
- Never ask, “What location do you what?”
- Why?
  - ❖ Guests coming to a new city always want to stay close to the airport or

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downtown because they think they will have better access to services, activities, etc.

- ❖ When this happens, hotline members that are not near the airport or downtown loose out on referrals.
  - ❖ Please be fair and follow the referral guidelines.
- 
- Ask for the travel date.
  - Ask for the number of nights required.
  - Ask for the number of guests traveling in the party.
  - Ask for the number of rooms and/or beds required.
  - Try to avoid discussing the following amenities.
    - ❖ Location
    - ❖ Price
    - ❖ Private versus shared bathrooms
    - ❖ Type of breakfasts served, and most of all
    - ❖ Quality of the member B&B
  - If asked, simply inform the caller that you are just a referral service based upon availability and they should discuss details with the hosts.
  - Always assure the caller that all member B&Bs have met the high standards required for membership. Focus on this as assurance of smart selection of accommodations.

## **MAKING THE REFERRALS**

- Unless the caller specifically asks for a particular location (or does not plan on having transportation) start with the top section.
- Cycle through each calendar and make referrals based on the caller's criteria.
- Only make three referrals.
- Mark the calendar you last referred with a sticky note so you know where to start referring next.

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- Tell the caller that they can call back if these three referrals do not suit their needs.
- Try to keep the call as brief as possible.
- Log the referrals on the 'Referral Call Log'.
- Why Log?
  - ❖ This helps us to review the success of our system
  - ❖ Justifies to our members that they are being referred
  - ❖ Justifies the marketing dollars we are spending

## **THINGS TO REMEMBER**

- Do not become a travel agent. We all want to help our guests; however, the hotline service is not designed as an advisory service.
- Do tell callers about the Travel Partners tab on the AABBA website – this is a good source of recommendations.
- When you act as an agent for the AABBA you place us in a position of liability.
- Do not get involved in answering questions about other cities, attractions or services.
- We are a volunteer service and we are only allowed to refer guests to member B&Bs.
- Do not comment on the quality or level of service of any member.
- All members have met our Standards and Ethics requirements and have passed a rigid peer review.
- Do not play favorites... give referrals out fairly.
- Every member has a right to an equal amount of referrals.
- Do not practice "Forced Sales." If you are not in the area the guest is requesting or do not have the amenity they want, do not include your B&B as one of the

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three referrals.

- Do not make personal long distance calls using the hotline phone.
- Do not make personal local calls on the hotline phone and please do not give the number to your friends and family.
- Do not call the B&B you just referred someone to.
- Check the voice mail often. And call back as quickly as possible or send out a broadcast email to [members@anchorage-bnb.com](mailto:members@anchorage-bnb.com) regarding the request.
- Delete the voicemail message when done.
- If the caller did not leave a call back number, then check the caller ID to see if there is a missed called identified. Call back promptly to offer your assistance.

## **FINAL NOTE**

- You are representing the AABBA B&Bs and Travel Partners when you answer the phone.
- You are not required to deal with unpleasant or demanding people.
- You are a volunteer.
- You are appreciated.
- Ask for help! Call our hotline chairperson with any question. The chairperson's number is listed in the Member Section of our website under Board Members.

### **Hotline Co-Chairs for 2011**

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