

**SAFETY, TRADITION VIOLATIONS, AND LEGAL ISSUES THAT HAVE COME TO
THE BOARD'S ATTENTION:
RE: PERPETRATORS ATTENDING SIA MEETING**

It has come to the Board's attention that there is disunity within some groups regarding perpetrators at meetings. First, we want to give some background:

HISTORY: In 1991 through 1995, a survey was sent out by the Board asking for guidance from membership on issues concerning perpetrators at meetings. As a result of that survey, a majority of groups voted that groups had the right and responsibility to decide whether or not to allow past perpetrators. Later, in another survey, it was decided that each group would decide what "past" meant. Groups also voted that no current perpetrator would be allowed at any SIA meeting.

CURRENT SITUATION: Now, in the spring of 2009, reports of group problems and safety issues, Tradition violations and legal realities regarding perpetrators at meetings have forced the Board to reexamine this issue.

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES RESPONSIBILITIES: The Board is responsible for oversight of financial and *legal* aspects of SIA and are *guardians of the Traditions*. SIA's Board of Trustees will not police groups. However, it is our responsibility to serve our membership by warning them when legal realities and Tradition violations threaten SIA as a whole. Our policy as stated on the SIAWSO website: *The WSO registers meetings with the assurance that they abide by the SIA Traditions and the general operating principles of the SIA program.* Only group that choose to follow the 12 Traditions of SIA will be listed in the Directory of SIA Meetings.

TRADITION and Literature VIOLATIONS:

The Board believes that by allowing perpetrators into meetings 5 of our 12 Traditions are being violated and guidance from program literature is being ignored:

Tradition One: *"Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends on SIA unity."* Further discussion of that tradition in our 12 & 12 continues, *"...No one person is allowed to disrupt a meeting by monopolizing, discussing other programs, philosophies or perpetration issues."* Also, a sense of safety in meetings is vital to survivors; this is especially true for new members. It can be difficult for the survivor initially to set limits, to know their steps, traditions and the group conscious process well enough to effectively protect themselves from the trap of re-victimization.

Tradition Three: *"The only requirement for membership is that you are a victim of child sexual abuse and that you desire to recover from it."* Recovery from the effects of child sexual abuse is the focus of our program. **The effects of perpetration on a perpetrator are not a SIA issue. An attendee discussing their own acts of perpetration at an SIA meeting, therefore, is inappropriate.**

Tradition 4: *"Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting another group or SIA as a whole."* Previously, groups gave themselves the *greater autonomy* to decide whether to allow perpetrators and discussions of one's own acts of perpetration in their meetings. Now, there is evidence that groups that allow perpetrators and discussion of attendees own acts of perpetration are losing members. Apparently survivors of incest do not feel safe in such an environment.

Tradition 5: *"Each SIA group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the incest survivor who still suffers."* This Tradition helps us to focus our mission and our intent. Our

founders accomplished this by limiting our scope, this is our program's life-saving "singleness of purpose." We are for the survivor who wants to recover from child sexual abuse.

Tradition 10: "*Survivors of Incest Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the SIA name ought never be drawn in public controversy.* Creating the environment where perpetrators are attending SIA meetings and speaking about acts of perpetration that they committed has drawn SIA into controversy and created disunity among our membership. From SIA's 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, "*Groups have tremendous freedom, but not at the expense of SIA unity.*" We need to remember to stand together as survivors, brought together by the tragedy of our past experiences. United we become something greater than the sum of our parts. We empower each other and with the tools of the program we heal. Our unity as a body makes it possible for us to integrate as individuals.

LEGAL RAMIFICATIONS

- 1) Groups *are* still and always will be autonomous. The Board of Trustees does not have authority over groups, and therefore, will never police groups. However, SIA's Board cannot continue to sanction and publish statements that explicitly state or even imply that past or present perpetrators are allowed at meetings. To continue to do so puts SIA in legal jeopardy and the life of our beloved program at risk.
- 2) Many of us are "mandated reporters" and therefore required by law and the nature of our work to let authorities know if we are made privy to abuse. Also, meeting places would have to be notified that known child molesters are gathering at their facility. The Board must not put members in a position to choose between anonymity and legal culpability. This is why we state that our membership is made up of adults 18 years and older.
- 3) At present some groups are listed as "no perpetrators." This distinction creates the implication that groups listed without that limitation allow perpetrators, to eliminate confusion, the distinction "no perpetrators" will no longer be in the directory and all SIA literature will state that perpetrators are not allowed at SIA meetings.

TO THOSE WHO HAVE ACTED OUT OR PERPETRATED

The Board recognizes that some survivors may have, regrettably, perpetrated abuse. Many members are uncertain as to whether they did or not. There is much confusion around this issue particularly for those who are new to the program. Additionally, many of us have internalized our perpetrator(s), further complicating this issue. From the SIAWSO website: *NOTE: As children, some survivors were forced, emotionally or physically, to abuse other children. Because they were forced, the SIA community does not consider such survivors to be true perpetrators. The adult(s) who staged the forced abuse were 100% responsible*

The challenges survivors face are many and they need to be dealt with assertively, overcoming them is vital to recovery. There are other places where survivors who believe they have perpetrated can get "outside help." Most importantly, working closely with a trained therapist who is comfortable, supportive and knowledgeable about the subject has been tremendously helpful for many survivors.

Survivors of child sexual abuse who have also perpetrated abuse on another, are to be commended for the courage it takes to work toward healing. We in no way mean to judge or condemn those among us. On the contrary, our intent is to protect and ensure the health and well-being of our membership, which means *SIA as a whole*.

What Does This Mean for Your Group?

The website and the following literature will be updated to reflect this action, **a realignment** with our Steps, Traditions and Literature, changes will be forthcoming in:

1. The Welcome
2. Intro of the Meeting Directory (on-line and hard copies)
3. 12 + 12
4. Group Concerns
5. Mission Statement
6. Who can attend a meeting?
7. Best Practices
8. Each meeting listing that specifies “no perpetrators”

Conclusion: the Board of Trustees of SIA, after seeking legal counsel, and in support of our Traditions, Steps and literature will state clearly on our website, in our Literature and head all Meeting Lists (published online and/or in the confidential directory) with the simple statement that,

*“neither past or current perpetrators of child sexual
abuse are allowed in any SIA meetings.”*

Yours in SIA Service,
The board of Trustees of SIA
Linda
Lee
Lisa
Axie
Elias
Juanita
Rebecca

*** It should be noted that the attendees of the SIA 2009 World Service Conference, voted unanimously in favor of supporting the Board’s action and approved this statement completely.**

YOUR INPUT

The Board always wants to know what you think about this or any other issues that are of concern to you or your group You can call 410.893.3322 (The # button by-passes the long answering machine) or email us at edleparr01@comcast.net