Secular Organizations for Sobriety (Sos) Encyclopedia Article

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Secular Organizations for Sobriety (Sos)

Secular Organizations for Sobriety (SOS National Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 5, Buffalo, New York 14215) is a self-help organization for alcohol and drug users, founded as an alternative to ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (AA) and other groups based on AA. It was intended to offer help to people who are uncomfortable with the emphasis on spirituality that is a central tenet of the AA Twelve-Step Programs. Founded by James Christopher, SOS began with a 1985 article. "Sobriety without Superstition," describing Christopher's own path to sobriety. SOS claimed in 1991 to have an international membership of 20,000, making it the largest of the alternative groups. In 1987, it was recognized by the State of California as an alternative to AA in sentencing offenders to mandatory participation in drug rehabilitation. Members of SOS are not necessarily nonreligious; however, many do not believe in an intervening higher power who takes responsibility for their individual problems.

Unlike AA—which emphasizes that the individual is powerless over alcoholism and must look to a "higher power" for help in achieving and maintaining sobriety—SOS and other alternative organizations assert the capacity of individuals to control their own behavior. SOS stresses total abstinence, personal responsibility, and self-reliance as the means to achieve and maintain sobriety (recovery), but the organization recognizes the importance of participating in a mutually supportive group as an adjunct to recovery. Members learn that open and honest communication aids in making the appropriate life choices that are essential to recovery. SOS shares with other self-help groups the importance of anonymity and the abstention from all drugs and alcohol.

SOS consists of a nonprofit network of autonomous nonprofessional local groups dedicated solely to helping individuals with alcohol and other drug addictions. It encourages and is supportive of continued scientific inquiry into the understanding of alcoholism and drug addiction.

Among other self-help organizations that see themselves as alternatives to AA are RATIONAL RECOVERY (RR) and Women for Sobriety (WFS).

See Also

Coerced Treatment for Substance Offenders; Disease Concept of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse; Treatment Types)