



CENTRAL WASHINGTON AREA PUBLIC RELATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ORIENTATION INFORMATION

9/2010

CWA Public Relations Subcommittee General Information

Purpose of the Public Relations Subcommittee

The purpose of the PR Subcommittee is to work together in the spirit of unity and cooperation to carry the message of recovery. In addition, the PR Subcommittee shall fulfill the goals as stated in this document, and serve the NA groups and the community at large in the Central Washington Area to ensure that our message reaches all those who might benefit from the NA program of recovery. The committee will accomplish this by coordinating the services we provide to maximize our ability to fulfill our primary purpose.

What does “public relations” mean for NA members

For our purposes in Narcotics Anonymous, the term “public relations” refers to all of the relationships we create and maintain with the general public, professionals, potential members, and each other in our groups and service communities.

Due to the Geographical size of this ASC, the PRC will be divided into 4 Divisions to better serve each area. The Divisions will be as follows; Ellensburg, Moses Lake, Wenatchee and Yakima. Each hereafter referred to as the DPRC. Each DPRC will have a Divisional Coordinator that will be accountable to the PRC.

The officers of the PRC are the Chair, Vice-Chair, Recording Secretary, Literature Coordinator, Phonenumber Coordinator, Schedules Coordinator, Website Coordinator and all 4 Divisional Coordinators.

Ultimately it is you, the individual member, who will breathe life into NA’s public relations efforts. Your own experiences are the best examples of NA’s effectiveness, making you the most valuable PR resource our fellowship has. The efforts undertaken by each member are absolutely essential to the success of our worldwide fellowship.-PR Handbook, Chap. 1-

Why does Narcotics Anonymous need relationships with the public?

As a fellowship, we have already made remarkable advancements in our relationships with the public. Area service committees around the world bring meetings into correctional facilities, provide information to various professionals, and interact with members of the public over NA phone-lines and in planning NA events. And yet, there is still room for us to grow.

We can grow by taking on a more active role in our relationships with members of the public. We can expand our ideas about which professionals might be able to help us fulfill our primary purpose. We can take even greater responsibility for the ways our personal behavior affects the public’s willingness to refer addicts to Narcotics Anonymous.

-PR Handbook, Chap. 1-

Preparing and training for public interactions

Preparing and training for relationships with the public includes considering who we are interacting with, and defining and practicing how we will be communicating in those interactions. *-PR Handbook-*

H&I - Hospitals and Institutions

What we want to communicate

The purpose of bringing panels and meetings into institutions is to carry NA's message to those who cannot regularly attend outside meetings. Our approaches will vary based on the type of facility and the rules of each facility. *-PR Handbook-*

Medication

Regardless of the personal opinions of its individual trusted servants, NA has no opinion about treatment methods such as the prescribing of medication. This can be a confusing area for trusted servants and for those attending NA meetings in an institution. Members often talk about our literature's message of complete abstinence from all drugs—but we have no opinion, as a fellowship, on medication. Our literature also says that we are not doctors and that we approach addiction in a spirit of non-professionalism. Our purpose is always the same: to carry NA's message to suffering addicts. Our message is best carried when we avoid engaging in controversies about topics like the use of medication. Members may want to refer to In Times of Illness, the essay on the Third Tradition in It Works: How and Why, and the H&I Handbook regarding this issue.

It is crucial that we do not advise anyone to stop taking their medication as prescribed. We are not doctors! Our approach is nonprofessional, and we have no opinion on outside issues.

We must be very sure it is understood that we do not advocate going against a physician's advice—nor, on the other hand, can we endorse the use of any drug.

- *H&I Members' Experience -PR Handbook-*

General

During orientation, you will learn the basics of H&I service work so that you are prepared when you go out on your first panel. Many people are apprehensive about H&I and wonder what they have to offer. If you have been in recovery for six months don't worry - YOU have a lot of experience, strength and hope to share!

This handout was designed to give you a basic outline of what we do and guidelines for you to follow when you are a panel speaker. The H&I Handbook gives a much more in-depth look at H&I work in NA and is available for sale at the subcommittee meeting if you decide you would like to know more about this rewarding area of service.

Requirements for H&I Service

You have been invited to carry the message of recovery through H&I because:

- You have at least 6 months abstinence from all drugs, including methadone (if you have questions about methadone please see World Service Board of Trustees Bulletin #29 available from the person orienting you). If you are currently taking narcotics for pain management, please refrain from speaking on an H&I panel.

- You have a strong NA message of recovery.
- You are willing to comply with all of the PR Subcommittee's (and facilities') requirements for participation.
- You are willing to carry the message in a responsible way.

Personal Commitments

- You are not sure you want to attend
- You are not sure you will be able to attend

If something comes up after you have agreed to go on a panel that makes you unable to attend, try to give the panel leader at least 48 hours notice so that s/he can invite someone to fill your spot. DO NOT ask someone else to take your place or to just come along. ONLY the panel leaders can invite people to the meeting. The panel leader cannot hold the meeting with less than two people so if you cancel at the last minute the residents may not have a meeting.

H&I Meeting Formats

A variety of meeting formats are available to carry the message into the various facilities. Most of the facilities in the Central Washington Area are short term and use a panel speaker format in which the residents do not share. Residents are asked to participate by reading from the White Book at the beginning of the meeting and are given time to ask questions at the end of the meeting. In long-term facilities, the residents may take a more active role, when asked, and the meeting may be run in a way similar to regular NA meetings on the outside. Before going on a panel in a facility you are unfamiliar with, ask the panel leader what the format of the meeting is. Panel leaders may choose to focus a meeting on a particular topic or reading from our literature or may choose simply to share about recovery. Regardless of the exact format, H&I meetings are an introduction to our fellowship and should demonstrate how NA works. Further information about format is available in the H&I Handbook.

Do's and Dont's

Do's

- Share about your own experience, strength, and hope.
- Obey all PR Subcommittee dress codes.
- Come to the meetings ON TIME.
- Check with the panel leader about any specific guidelines for the facility you are going to.
- Use NA language (i.e., "clean" as opposed to "clean and sober")

Dont's

- Do not break another's anonymity.
- Don't debate any issues regarding the facilities rules and regulations.
- Don't get involved in discussion of outside issues – remember we are there to carry the message of hope in NA.

- Don't focus on what your life was like in active addiction (they already know what active addiction is like) – remember that we are not interested in what or how much you use.
- Don't debate what drugs are acceptable – NA is a program of abstinence from ALL drugs.
- Don't discuss conditions within the facility or opinions about staff members.
- Don't carry excessive cash or wear flashy or expensive jewelry.
- Don't show favoritism to any resident(s).
- Don't take messages into or out of a facility.
- Never give out your or any other person's phone number (refer to schedule and hotline numbers).
- Never carry in any contraband items such as cigarettes, candy, gum, or weapons.

Working with Others: Men with Men, Women with Women

In facilities where all the residents are either men or women then only same sex NA members will participate in the panels. Facilities that have both men and women will have panels with both sexes represented but we need to remember our primary purpose at all times and be sure that interactions between men and women are not inappropriate (that it does not interfere with carrying the message). Problems that arise in this area have the potential to seriously damage the credibility of Narcotics Anonymous.

Dress Code

- Don't wear revealing clothing. No halter tops, shorts, tank tops or very tight clothes.
- No open toed shoes/sandals.
- No excessive jewelry.
- Try to keep tattoos covered.
- No advertising logos on shirts.
- Remember that you are representing the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous and may be the first contact that the resident has with us.

Questions and Answers

Generally questions about the program and the meeting are encouraged at the end of the panel presentations (panel leaders may have various ways of doing this), but when answering residents' questions a few things should be kept in mind.

Please remember that NA has no opinion on outside issues. You may be asked to give an opinion about such outside issues as:

- Other recovery programs, fellowships or facilities.
- The facility the resident is in (i.e. do you think I should stay here?)
- Many other topics that do not pertain to recovery from addiction in the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship. It is very important that we don't get drawn into these types of discussions! Always remember to share experience, strength and hope about YOUR recovery in NA.

Adolescents

The term 'adolescent' refers to anyone under the age of 18. We need to remember that adolescents are prospective members and need to be treated with respect. To an adolescent, the stress experienced due to peer pressure or their relationship with parents and/or teachers can be just as much of a crisis as losing jobs, divorce, or losing a home is to an adult. In NA, we learn to deal with our feelings and emotions regardless of what causes them. We learn how to work through them by utilizing the 12 Steps and by sharing burdens with other addicts. We can share with addicts of any age how we have coped with emotions and not had to use drugs.

Due to the governmental statutes regarding adolescents, we need to be especially aware of the facilities' regulations as they relate to our meetings/interactions with these potential members. One suggestion that we may make to the facility is that they make attendance at H&I meetings voluntary. We have found that this reduces distraction, increasing the opportunity for recovery in the NA fellowship.

The bulk of our experience suggests that adolescents respond well to a clear, strong message of recovery regardless of the age of the person sharing. Adolescents respond more to the message than they do to the messenger. All H&I meetings are highly structured and focused on recovery through the 12 Steps of NA, and our experience has shown that we do not need to use a special format when carrying the message to adolescents.

In addition to the do's and don'ts found at the end of this handout, there are a few additional guidelines when working with this age group:

Do's and Don'ts for Adolescent Facilities

Do's

- Remember that this is a 'we' program. No addict should feel that s/he is being PREACHED to.
- Remember that an addict is an addict regardless of age or what/how much or how long they have used.
- Share about fun in recovery (i.e. social events – dances, fellowship, etc.)
- Acknowledge and validate their feelings
- BE HONEST

Don'ts

- DON'T glorify your past
- DON'T say things like "I feel like I am talking to my kids"
- DON'T compare your bottom to theirs
- DON'T patronize (talk down to) adolescents
- DON'T use profanity (that can get you/us barred from the facility)

Remember at all times that you have a responsibility to the facility, the residents, and to Narcotics Anonymous. If you observe the above suggestions and follow the 12 Traditions, you will uphold your responsibility to all three.

Being an H&I panel member is a GREAT way to be of service and we welcome you to our subcommittee.

H&I Panel Leaders

- After 6 months of H&I experience you are eligible to become a panel leader.
- Becoming a panel leader is a great way to strengthen your personal foundation in recovery

- The P.R. subcommittee elects panel leaders at the monthly subcommittee meetings and due to the volume of H&I panels we cover there are opportunities to become a panel leader almost every month.

Phoneline

Requirements

7.15 DPRC Phoneline Volunteer

- Required to attend General PR Orientation and Phoneline / 12 Step Volunteer Orientation prior to working on Phoneline/carrying phone.
- Familiarity with public relations related NAWS approved handbooks. (Includes Public Relations and Phoneline Handbooks).
- Keep phone call logs/records according to NA handbooks and service guidelines and make them available to the PRC monthly.
- Clean time requirement of one year.
- Can assist with PR Phone line Orientations after 6 months experience.
- Must attend the DPRC in which they live if they are scheduled to answer the phone.
- Encouraged to attend PRC meeting.
- Encouraged to attend the quarterly regional all subcommittee meeting.

How The CWA Phoneline Works

The phoneline now includes recorded information such as meeting times and locations, NA event information, and the message of Narcotics Anonymous. If the caller wishes to speak to a member of NA, they can press a key to be connected to one of our volunteers. The system then dials out to 10 volunteers at the same time. The members of this group (called a "Hunt Group") will then hear a recorded message stating "**A caller is holding for you; press any key to be connected**". This is their only indication that it is an NA Helpline call, as **the number that will appear on caller ID will NOT be the CWA Phoneline phone number** – it will be whatever number the caller is dialing from. If they have Caller ID Block, no number at all will be displayed. If unable to accept the call, they simply hang up and another volunteer should answer. If no volunteer takes the call it will go to voicemail. The first member of the Hunt Group to "press any key" is connected to the caller and all others will drop off the system. You may hear the message "the caller is no longer available" meaning the call has been taken by another Hunt Group member.

- Upon accepting the call, the volunteer should answer "Narcotics Anonymous Phoneline, this is (your name)."
- **PLEASE NOTE: if you are away during a shift and see "missed call" upon returning to your phone, it is IMPERATIVE that you NOT – repeat – DO NOT - redial these numbers and ask "I missed your call – who's this?" Doing so could make callers wary of calling this helpline. One suggestion would be to never call back numbers you don't recognize during your assigned shift.**

- The automated system now has recorded information to answer many of the routine questions (days/times/locations of meetings & event information). Please listen to the online menu to become comfortable with what information is already online as you may need to assist callers with using the system from time to time.

Your Participation And Commitment

A call to our Phonenumber may be someone's first interaction with Narcotics Anonymous. These calls are vital; a Phonenumber call can make a major difference in whether or not an addict makes it to an NA meeting. We need to respond to callers in a way that makes them feel like they matter. You are encouraged to bring your experience and all your public relations awareness to this important service opportunity. When speaking with callers, remain objective and non-argumentative. A warm friendly voice can reassure a frightened, uneasy person in need of help.

It is the Phonenumber volunteer's responsibility to learn and understand all Helpline policies. This service requires a comprehensive understanding of policy and traditions. Please read all PR subcommittee minutes to be aware of policy changes and current issues. Phonenumber volunteers are required to turn in a monthly phone log. These can be turned in to their divisional coordinator or emailed directly to the Phonenumber Coordinator. This will help us to share information amongst the volunteers regarding call trends, problems, situations, etc. Mainly we are looking for information about problem calls, challenging calls, and any other non-routine calls that you experienced over the month.

Please contact the Phonenumber Coordinator with any problems, suggestions, complaints, or issues for the other carriers to be aware of.

When scheduled to answer calls, you have made a valuable commitment to carry the NA message of recovery to addicts who still suffer. Please make yourself available to accept as many calls as possible during your shift. **If you are consistently unable to accept calls during your shift please alert the Phonenumber Coordinator so we can modify the schedule.**

It's All Public Relations!

When we answer the Phonenumber, "This is _____. I am an addict," we have started a new public relations effort with that call. It doesn't make any difference who's on the other end. They have called seeking information, whether they are asking where a meeting is, how to find a treatment program, what to do about a loved one addicted to drugs, how to learn more about NA, or for any other reason. We need to treat each caller in a loving way with respect and dignity. If it is their first contact, they will form an opinion about NA based on your responses.

- Read a Guide to Phonenumber Service and the local guidelines.
- We are not counselors or therapists.
- Give brief, clear, concise answers.
- Have a current schedule available.
- Explain that our recovery process begins at meetings.
- The helpline exists to help people get to meetings.
- Don't recommend specific treatment programs. (Even if you like one.)
- Suggest looking up Drugs and Alcohol in the Yellow Pages.
- Suggest an Internet search for Drug and Alcohol Treatment.
- Be clear that NA is not affiliated with any treatment programs.

When dealing with loved ones or friends of addicts the following is helpful.

- Always ask if the addict wants or has asked for help.
- Always ask to speak with the addict, if possible.
- Invite them to bring the addict to an open meeting of NA.
- Explain that there are organizations to assist friends and loved ones.
- Make it clear that NA cooperates with, but is not affiliated with them.
- It is OK to say that Naranon, CODA, or Families Anonymous exist.
- Don't make it difficult for these people to find help elsewhere.
- Practice empathy. They may be in emotional pain or under stress.
- If callers want information about NA that you can't answer, please direct them to the appropriate resource.
- Collect accurate contact information; phone number, e-mail, etc.
- Refer the call to the appropriate contact or committee chair.
- It is OK to say, "I don't know the answer to your question."
- Remember that addicts who are not yet in recovery depend on these calls being answered and need us to be helpful.

Our success as an organization is tied to the behavior of the phonline volunteers. Be helpful. Be courteous. Be available. Be brief. Be precise. Be a good example.

What is likely to be attractive to the public and to professionals who interact with addicts is reliable communication, responsibility, commitment, and behavior that reflects recovery. Responsiveness is a key principal for Helpline volunteers. This means that trusted servants engage with callers in a sensitive, appropriate, and helpful manner. Leadership qualities such as integrity, the ability to listen, and sound judgment (see the Concept Four essay in *Twelve Concepts for NA Service* for more details) are essential in providing Helpline service. Other qualities relevant to Helpline service are an understanding of the importance of public relations, the ability to relate well to other people, and the abilities to communicate and stay calm under pressure. These traits are important because Helpline volunteers sometimes have to perform in higher-pressure situations and because they are likely to be the first contact that people have with NA.

Avoid Using NA Jargon

Try to avoid using NA lingo such as "home group", "H&I" "PR", "get a sponsor", "IP's", etc.

Common Phonline Calls

Remember that we carry the message of recovery to the caller, when we express that:

- Our primary objective is to get the addict to a meeting
- The program works
- We were once suffering ourselves
- We care and are willing to help

The primary purpose of the Phonline is to GET AN ADDICT TO A MEETING. Give callers information in a professional and courteous manner. Remember that to the general public, you represent Narcotics Anonymous. The attitude you project is important. You are a vital link in N.A.'s public image. Try to always remain positive. You are representing a program that helps addicts recover from the disease of addiction. Carry the N.A. message with humility and in a positive manner. Our tone of voice and delivery speed are just as important as the words we use. Acknowledge what the caller is saying and feeling. Do not use judgmental words or preach to the caller.

Occasionally callers will give you a hard time; handle it to the best of your ability and let it go.

It is important to keep in mind that calls may not follow exactly the dialogue detailed in this section. However, familiarity with this information will make it easier to respond appropriately and to serve within the spirit of the Twelve Traditions of NA.

Fellowship Matters/Requests For Information

Give a brief description of NA to callers requesting presentations, special meetings, literature, activities, etc. Explain that these requests should be referred to the PR chair. NEVER make these types of commitments on your own. Ask the caller to redial the main Phonenumber and leave a voicemail or give them the PR chairs number. See additional information below. If circumstances dictate, you should also obtain the information from the caller and pass this along to the appropriate service member.

In the event that a member of the media contacts you, be ready to respond appropriately. It is important to refer such calls to the Public Information service members at the Area, Region, or World Services level.

Schedules/Meeting Changes

Anyone calling with information about meeting changes should contact the PR Committee Schedule Coordinator.

Public Information

The purpose of Public Information is to inform the public that N.A. exists and offers recovery from the disease of addiction. Public Information is a vital part of carrying the message to the addict that still suffers. If someone calls requesting bulk literature, speakers, PI speakers, or is a member of the media (press, radio, tv, film, internet, etc.) have them leave a detailed message in the voicemail box or contact the PR chair.

Hospitals and Institutions

All calls from hospitals, treatment centers and jails should be handled by the PR chair, who is responsible for ensuring the N.A. message is carried to addicts that have limited or no access to regular N.A. meetings. Have the caller leave a detailed message in the voicemail box or contact the PR chair.

Personal Calls

If the caller wants to meet or talk to a specific individual in NA, politely tell them, "It is our policy that we cannot accept personal messages, and I cannot give out the telephone number of anyone who may or may not be in the fellowship." Keep in mind that the anonymity of our members is very important, and we must never acknowledge anyone's membership in our fellowship, either directly or indirectly.

Talking To a Friend or Family Member

Many calls come from family members or friends who are concerned with the welfare of the person who is using drugs. We must remember that our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Ask if the addict wants or has asked for help. Try to have them put the addict on the phone with you; if unable/unwilling, suggest that the family member attend an open meeting to find out more about Narcotics Anonymous. Suggest that the caller bring the addict who is still suffering with them.

Second, family members often want us to talk to an addict who is unwilling to do anything about his/her problem or they want us to call them personally. We cannot do this. Tell them that the addict needs to call us or be willing to get on the telephone. We can only help someone who is willing to help themselves. If the addict doesn't want to stop using or come to the telephone, tell the callers, "We cannot do anything for your loved one until they want to stop using - the addict must want help. There are however, programs for loved ones of addicts. I can tell you how to contact one if you would like."

You can give them the numbers for NARANON, ALANON, and FAMILIES ANONYMOUS. Let the caller know that we are not affiliated with nor do we endorse any of these outside organizations. Remember to treat the family member or friend with kindness and the utmost patience - they may be the one with the drug problem. Many addicts have come to the program after calling for someone else.

Talking To An Addict

Listen and respond to the caller. A suffering addict probably will indicate that he/she wants information or help.

Addict Wants Information About NA

Answer the caller's questions. If you sense that the caller wants more, ask, "Do you have any more questions about Narcotics Anonymous?" After the caller has asked all his/her questions, and if you sense the caller wants to continue the conversation, then respond, "It sounds like you are really hurting. I know the desperation that you must be feeling. Do you want help to quit using drugs?" The addict will indicate if he/she wants help.

Not Interested, May Not Be Ready For Help

Conclude the call by saying, "When you are ready, we are here to help you. Our program works for those who want to quit using. Always remember there is a way out."

Addict Interested - May Be Ready For Help

If the caller wants help that is beyond the scope of services that NA can provide (e.g., detox, treatment information, etc.), furnish one or more telephone numbers from the Community Services Referral List. Be familiar with "How to Handle Special Calls". Do not hang up until you are fairly sure you have done all you can for this caller. If it is not a crisis call, listen to the caller and express your concern.

Addict Wants To Stop Using Or Is Not Sure

Respond empathetically. Share a little about what it was like, what happened, and what it is like today. You might sum it up by saying, "There was a time in my life that I thought I'd never be able to quit using drugs. However, since I found NA I haven't had to use. Would you like to go to an NA meeting?"

Refer Addict To A Meeting

Give the caller information (time, location, and directions if needed) about the next available meeting. Take a few moments and explain to the caller what he/she can expect at a meeting (see "NEW TO NA?" at end of this document). Include the structure/format of the meeting (e.g., speaker, topic discussion, Basic Text study, etc.). It is helpful to go into some detail to make them feel as comfortable as possible. Conclude the call by saying, "To Get the most out of the meeting, try to get there a few minutes early. If you need further help, give us a call again. You've done the right thing by calling us. I will/won't be at the meeting-I'm looking forward to meeting you."

Addict Won't Go To A Meeting

Ask them, "Why not?" The following are examples of ways to respond to excuses for not going to a meeting. The addict's questions and statements may sound like he/she is not ready yet, but remember that the caller has already expressed that he/she needs help. Our intention is to help the caller focus on the solutions, rather than the problems keeping him/her from attending NA meetings.

If the caller is on guard, "What happens at a meeting?" respond, "We are a group of clean addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. Addicts share about what it was like and what life is like today. You aren't required to do or say anything." You might also want to read to them "New To NA?" found at the end of this document.

If the caller presents obstacles, "My car doesn't work, etc. respond, "Does this problem have a solution?" or "All of our meetings are on bus lines."

If the caller uses his/her children for an excuse, "I don't have anyone to take care of my children, respond, "If you have to, you can bring them to an open meeting. If they are school age, you can attend daytime meetings."

If the caller says they are too scared respond, "You're not alone. During my first meeting I felt so self-conscious I was afraid to say anything. You don't need to worry, we're all pretty friendly." If the caller says they are still using, "I can't stay clean long enough to go to a meeting," respond "If you want to stop using, then you are welcome. We ask that you not have any drugs or paraphernalia with you during the meeting."

If the caller says they are too hopeless, "It won't work for me. I'm too far gone." respond, "I felt that way too, however, with the help of NA, I have a choice. I don't have to use today." If the caller has other excuses, "I can't go because: I have family or work obligations; my wife/husband doesn't approve; etc." respond "It sounds like if you don't get help you may not be able to keep your job, family, etc."

After discussing the caller's reasons for not going to a meeting and some possible solutions, ask the caller, "Do you want to go to a meeting?"

How To Handle Special Calls

A Narcotics Anonymous Phonenumber is strictly for dispensing information about the NA Fellowship, NA meetings, and recovery. The volunteer must remember that they are only a recovering addict sharing their experience, strength, and hope. As volunteers, we are not professional crisis counselors, doctors, or psychologists, etc., and do not have the right to give professional advice. Callers with issues that are beyond the boundaries of Narcotics Anonymous should be quickly and politely given an appropriate referral number for the Community Service Referral List. Before providing any other referral number, always explain that Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with, nor recommends, any other organizations, institutions, emergency services, agencies, or programs. We simply provide alternate telephone numbers for those callers who need services other than NA.

Crisis Calls

Although most of the calls taken by the phone line volunteer are routine in nature, occasionally a crisis call may arise. Always take these calls seriously. When the volunteer has established that a caller is in crisis, the volunteer can quickly refer the caller to the appropriate telephone number from the Community Service Referral List. After giving the appropriate referral number, ask them to call back after the crisis has passed if they would like to hear about recovery from drug addiction.

How To Handle a Potential Overdose

First try to get them to call 911. If you remain calm it will have a beneficial affect on your caller. Do what you can but under no circumstances give out any medical advice.

Handling a Suicide Threat

We are not a crisis line and are not trained to help in these matters. Suggest the caller dial 911 or the Suicide Prevention Line at 425-481-0560.

Handling a Drug Tip

When someone calls with a drug tip, advise them that we are a program for addicts seeking recovery from the disease of addiction. We are not affiliated with any outside organizations or law enforcement agencies. Do **NOT** advise them to call the police.

Do's and Dont's for Phonenumber

- Do always identify yourself with your first name only and state that you are an addict or a recovering addict.
- Do always have the necessary materials (e.g., White Booklet, meeting list NA pamphlets) close to the telephone, in order to avoid delay and confusion.
- Do find out what the caller needs. Ask questions.
- Do, if you are returning a call, be certain that the person requesting help is on the line before identifying yourself as an addict or mentioning Narcotics Anonymous.
- Do remember to be helpful and polite to all callers.
- Do make appropriate referrals when necessary.
- Do keep a log of all calls you answer.
- Do contact the phone line chairperson if problems arise.
- Do know and apply the Traditions in all your interactions with callers.
- Do always give accurate information about our Fellowship.
- Do execute good sense and judgment in all your interactions with callers.
- Do keep the calls as brief as possible. We are not counselors or therapists.
- Don't argue with people whose views of addiction differ from yours, or NA's. If the caller does not want to stop using, do not try to persuade him/her to stop.
- Don't try to handle calls you are not qualified to answer. Don't give medical advice.
- Don't give out other people's names or telephone numbers.
- Don't answer questions about who was at an NA meeting (e.g., to police officers, probation officers, or significant others). However, general information may be given about NA's make-up (variance in size of meeting, NA open to all age groups, etc).
- Don't be rude, short, disrespectful, or use any foul language or profanity.
- Never guess the answer to a question. If you do not know, tell the caller you do not know.
- Don't glorify addiction by telling war stories.

Frequently Asked Questions

Helpline Volunteers' Experience With Calls

These frequently asked questions are meant to help trusted servants provide clear, consistent, and informative responses. When responding to a question using terminology, such as "leader", please explain to the listener what we mean by that language. In an effort to gain an understanding of the information here, trusted servants can discuss and rehearse the questions and answers below. What follows are possible answers to questions frequently asked by helpline callers.

Questions Asked by Potential Members

- **I've been using (smoking pot) for three years and I'm not sure if I am an addict. Can N.A. help?**

We suggest attending an NA meeting and speaking with some of the members there. Because NA meetings are a safe place, newcomers are encouraged to ask questions. Also, read some of our literature, which is available at most NA meetings, and decide for yourself. The informational pamphlet Am I an Addict? May help you in your decision making.

- **I am getting drug-tested by my parole officer; how long does cocaine stay in your system?**

Narcotics Anonymous is a twelve-step fellowship for those who think they may have a problem with drugs. We are a self-help, recovery-oriented organization and employ no medical professionals. We do not give any medical advice or opinions, but we do help addicts find recovery through the NA program.

- **What should I expect when I go to my first NA meeting? Do I have to talk?**

Typically a leader or chairperson will conduct the meeting. There is usually time for participation in which members share about their experience, strength, and hope with staying clean. You do not have to speak during the meeting if you don't want to. We encourage you to get there a little early so that you can speak with some of the members and pick up some literature before the meeting starts.

How much does NA cost? Are you counselors?

There are no fees or dues to be a member of NA. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using. We are not professional counselors; we are recovering addicts who share our experience to help each other stay clean.

- **I am a nurse by profession and I want to get clean. Where can I find a nurses' meeting?**

Some areas have common needs meetings while others do not. This area does/does not have a nurses' NA meeting. We can tell you, however, that recovering addicts from all types of professions attend our meetings.

- **I'd like to go to an NA meeting but I don't have a car. Can you help?**

Yes, we can try. Where do you live? Let me take your number down and see if I can find a ride for you. (Refer to area Twelfth-Step list) Note: This may not be a service offered in some areas. If your area is interested in Twelve Step lists, you may refer to the Public Relations Handbook, Chapter Nine.

- **I'm suicidal and I don't want to live anymore. What should I do?**

We strongly suggest contacting the suicide prevention number, which is 425-481-0560 or 911 to get immediate assistance.

Question Asked by Loved Ones

- **My boyfriend is using drugs, stealing, and cheating. What can I do to help him? Will you call him?**

Because Narcotics Anonymous is a self-help program, addicts must have the desire to stop using. Once he is ready to stop using drugs, please have him call us so we can direct him to an NA meeting in his area. In the meantime, you may want to call Nar-Anon or Families Anonymous. Although we are not affiliated with these organizations, we are happy to provide their telephone numbers.

- **My son/daughter is using drugs and wants to stop taking drugs. Can I go with him/her to their first meeting?**

You may attend an "open" NA meeting with your son/daughter. Open meetings welcome family members and the community at large. Closed meetings are for addicts only. Let me check our meeting list, so I can give you several choices of open meetings...

- **Will you call me if my son/daughter does not show up to meetings regularly?**

No, we are not able to do this. Because this is a self-help program, it is not our position to monitor an addict's willingness to attend meetings.

Questions Asked by Community Members

- **I heard that my old friend, Jane Smith, is in NA. Can I have her phone number?**

We are not at liberty to give out contact information for individuals who may or may not be members.

- **Drugs are being sold in my apartment complex. Can you come and arrest them?**

Narcotics Anonymous is a twelve-step fellowship for those who think they may have a problem with drugs. We are a self-help, recovery-oriented organization and employ no law enforcement professionals.

Public Information

PI was created to inform the public that Narcotics Anonymous exists, where we can be found, and what we can or cannot do for the addict who still suffers.

PI deals with the general public and professionals (drug courts, treatment councilors, correctional workers etc.), generally speaking for Narcotics Anonymous as a whole.

If you are interested in this type of service please check the PI line on the information form you received.

Getting Others Involved

The principle of service, critical to the application of our Eleventh Tradition, is not a passive principle. To be of maximum service to the still-suffering addict, we must energetically seek to carry our message throughout our cities, towns, and villages.

- Strive to make service attractive—be a good example.
- Identify members who may have skills, but not much experience, and SUPPORT their involvement in service. Be a mentor.
- Encourage sponsees to participate in service. Remember service is the 3rd side to our pyramid of recovery.
- Invite those members who may have been of service in the past to join in current local efforts. Create a pool of former trusted servants.

...We must take vigorous steps to make our program widely known. The better and broader our public relations, the better we will be able to serve.

Tradition Eleven, It Works: How and Why

Notes and Important Contacts