

# Preface

## Welcome to the Public Relations Orientation

In Narcotics Anonymous, public relations simply mean taking a more conscientious approach to the relationships we create with the public. These relationships are usually the result of members' interactions at meetings and events, members' performing specific service functions, such as H&I meetings, PI panels, Helpline services and members representing NA (sometimes unknowingly) during the daily routine of their lives. The scope of public relations is broad.

We can think about public relations as dynamic relationships. The ways we create and maintain relationships with the public will continue to change and grow over time.

This orientation is designed for PR in our Area. Although you may be here for a specific service the way we conduct ourselves is not specific to that service but the same for all areas of Public Relations.

## **Orientation**

This PR orientation is a period that allows NA members to become familiar with PR subcommittee work so they aren't rushed into it without any preparation for this service. Many people are quite apprehensive about getting into PR for a variety of reasons. Don't be put off, everyone has something to offer.

This packet has been compiled by the West Puget Area PR Subcommittee, comprised of Hospitals and Institutions (H&I), Public Information (PI), and Phonenumber, to give a brief outline of some of the specifics that will be important for you as a panel member.

## **H&I Purpose**

Hospital and Institutions subcommittees conduct panels that carry the NA message to addicts who often have no other way of hearing our message. Treatment panels are conducted for patients at addiction treatment centers, mental health facilities, and therapeutic communities. Correctional panels are held for inmates at jails, prison, and forensic hospitals.

## **Requirements**

1. You have at least six months abstinence from all drugs.
2. You have a strong NA message of recovery from addiction.
3. You seem willing to comply with all of the H&I subcommittee and the facilities requirements.
4. You are willing to carry the message in a responsible way.
5. You are willing to attend at least one subcommittee every three months.
6. You are willing to be re-orientated every six months.
7. You are willing to keep a current phone number listed with the H&I subcommittee.

## **PI Purpose**

The general mission of the PI Subcommittee is to inform addicts and others in the community of the availability of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Services provided by PI subcommittees vary widely from area to area. The simplest kind of PI project is the production and distribution of fliers throughout the community announcing that NA is available and that more information can be had either by calling the local NA information phonenumber or by attending an NA meeting. PI subcommittee also often conducts public meetings for community members; distribute public service announcements to local radio and television stations, and respond to media questions.

Many public information projects serve primarily to encourage people to call the local phonenumber for more information on NA.

## **Phoneline Purpose**

The Phoneline Subcommittee maintains a telephone information service for Narcotics Anonymous that helps addicts and others in the community find us easily and quickly. Phoneline volunteers often serve as the first point of contact between community at large and the NA Fellowship.

## **The language of our message**

In keeping with the First Step and the First Tradition of NA, we ask all speakers to use "NA language in all you present to the public. More specifically, we identify ourselves simply as ADDICTS. We refer to our time in the program as CLEANTIME or RECOVERY.

In our First Step we have shifted the focus off of specific drugs and onto The Disease of Addiction. Any mention of specific drugs or more than one addiction distorts the focus and some of the unity called for in our First Tradition is lost. We thank you for your cooperation with this simple but important matter.

## **Anonymity**

When an individual member of NA finds themselves in the limelight, it can create an artificial barrier between that particular member and other members of the fellowship. It can tap into that part of an addict's character that sets us up as experts, which of course none of us are. It is important to not only keep others anonymous outside of the fellowship, but also to keep our own as well.

## **H&I**

The format of any particular H&I meeting/presentation may vary from meeting to meeting depending on the type of facility. In short-term facilities, the format will be more focused on the panel members carrying a message in to the residents, while at a long-term facility we may encourage more participation from the residents. In H&I we are carrying the message into the facility. At an H&I meeting we are there to help addicts become aware of what NA is and how it works in our lives. In effect, an H&I meeting is an introduction for our fellowship.

The panel leader should let you know what the format is before the meeting/presentation and should be able to answer any questions you may have about it.

## **Working with others: Men with Men, Women with Women**

Some facilities house only men or only women. Other facilities house both men and women, but keep them separate. In these facilities, where your meetings/presentations will consist of only men or only women, we feel strongly that only same sex Narcotics Anonymous members should participate. Remember, our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery, not to make our meetings more popular with the addicts we are trying to help. Problems that arise in this area have the potential to seriously damage the credibility of Narcotics Anonymous. Our experience has taught us that we can avoid these problems if we follow this simple guideline.

## **Adolescents**

When adolescents are referred to in this orientation, we are referring to anyone under the legal age. We need to remember that adolescents are prospective members and should be treated with respect, when sharing in an H&I meeting/presentation. We need to remember that to an adolescent, the stress experienced from peer pressure or the relationship with their parents or teachers may be just as much a crisis to them as losing a job, a marriage, or a house. In NA we learn to deal with our feelings and emotions, and share with others how we have been able to work through them by utilizing the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.

Due to the governmental statues regarding adolescents, we need to be especially aware of facilities rules and regulations as they relate to our interaction with these prospective members. For example, some facilities may require a staff member to be present during meetings/presentations. One suggestion we may make to administrators of facilities for adolescents is they make attendance at H&I meetings voluntary. We have found that this reduces distraction, increasing the opportunity for recovery in the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship.

While some people maintain that adolescents respond to people closer to their own age, the bulk of our experience suggests that the age of the person sharing at an adolescent H&I meeting is secondary to their ability to share a strong, clear message of recovery. Adolescents seem to respond more to the message than to the messenger. All H&I meetings are highly structured and should be geared towards recovery though the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.

## **Questions and Answers**

This is a good idea to encourage questions concerning what was presented at the meeting or other general questions about NA, but there are a few things you should keep in mind..

## **Who is best suited to carry the message in an H&I setting?**

A large majority of the facilities where our H&I subcommittees proved an H&I presentation have other Twelve Step fellowships providing meetings as well. Clients and/or inmates will hear a variety of recovery messages. Other Twelve Step fellowships do not need our assistance in carrying their message. References to other fellowships and their literature may lead one to believe that the only way an addict can recover is to attend all Twelve Step fellowships. As a fellowship, we need to allow the addicts we may come in contact with the opportunity to choose for themselves which fellowship is best suited for them.

Any fellowship-utilizing twelve step recovery has a set of traditions. The Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, as directed by our Fifth Tradition, has but one primary purpose. Our primary purpose is to carry the message. Unity is one of our greatest strengths in carrying the message. Unity of purpose keeps our focus in carrying the message.

## **What is the message that we are asked to carry?**

That an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, loose the desire to use, and find a new way to live.

Also the freedom of recovery (today) can be theirs.

Please remember that NA has no opinion on outside issues.

Occasionally during question and answer period or when talking after the meeting/presentation, the residents will ask us to give an opinion on outside issues such as:

1. Other recovery programs or fellowships
2. The facility, ie: "Do I need to stay in treatment?"
3. Any other issues that do not pertain to recovery from addiction in the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship.

## **Following are a list of things to keep in mind when representing Narcotics Anonymous:**

- Clearly state that Narcotics Anonymous is separate from the facility and from other fellowships.
- Briefly explain what H&I is.
- Ensure that a clear NA message of recovery is carried by all panel members.
- Involve residents with the meeting, especially in long term facilities. (readings, etc.).

- Remember that this is a "we" program. No addict should feel that he/she is being preached to.
- Remember that an addict is an addict, regardless of age.
- Tell them that there is fun in recovery, ie: social events, fellowship, etc.
- Acknowledge and validate their feelings and emotions.
- Obey the dress code, exercise common sense.
- Adhere to the security regulations at all times and keep staff aware of your whereabouts at all times.
- Make directories of outside meetings available to residents.

**When representing Narcotics Anonymous never do any of the following:**

- Never attend H&I facilities alone.
- Never emphasize "using days" while sharing an NA message of Recovery.
- Never give anyone within the facility your address or phone number.
- Never use excessive profanity.
- Never break another person's anonymity.
- Never debate which drugs are acceptable. NA is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs.
- Never debate any issues involving facility rules, regulations, programs, or other fellowships.
- Never get involved in outside issues, remember why we are there.
- Never discuss conditions within the facility.
- Never discuss facility staff members with inmates.
- Never wear flashy jewelry and don't carry excessive cash.
- Never show favoritism to any resident.
- Never take messages or carry letters in or out of the facility.
- Never bring an NA member who has friends and/or family in the facility.
- Never ask what type of crime an inmate has been convicted of, or discuss guilt or innocence.
- Never accept money or gifts from, or give money or gifts to any inmate.
- Never discuss religion or sexual orientation as this may alienate your audience.

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

**Public Information**

Public information is informing the public about recovery from addiction through the Twelve Steps and Twelve traditions of Narcotics Anonymous.

Public information work is accomplished through service committees directly responsible to those they serve. Our PI subcommittee provides community awareness of what NA is, as well as how, when, and where we are available.

We get the job done by establishing clear guidelines for our subcommittees, setting goals, prioritizing task, adhering to our Twelve Traditions, and a lot of hard work.

## **Public Information Community Meetings**

Public information community meetings may result from your subcommittee's invitation or at the request of an individual or group. The most frequent contact is initially made through the phonenumber, which is one important reason for communication between subcommittees. Phonenumber volunteers must have contact names and numbers of those members active in PI so that requests can be responded to quickly and efficiently.

### **What is a Public Information Community Meeting?**

The purpose of this type of meeting is to inform the public about our fellowship. A public information community meeting differs from an open NA meeting in that we invite people outside our fellowship to attend and we structure the meeting to address the particular focus of our guests. This is a "special meeting" rather than a regular NA meeting.

The focus of a meeting of this type will be determined in part by your choice of the people who will attend. Examples include (1) a community meeting in the neighborhood inviting clergy, teachers from nearby schools, or members of a neighborhood association., or(2) a city-side, or county meeting to inform health care professionals and workers in governmental agencies.

The point is, this is a meeting hosted by Narcotics Anonymous and structured to effectively carry the message to addicts and to people who come in contact with addicts.

### **Do's and Don'ts for PI Service Work in General**

Do's:

- Have a working knowledge of the Twelve Traditions.
- Follow established guidelines.
- Be consistent. Follow through with your plan of action.
- Keep updated records of contacts, posted announcements, PSA's, speakers lists, and follow up regularly.
- Remember quality is more important than quantity. Start with one or two projects and do them well before branching out.

- Make sure that lists of meetings, twelve step volunteers and speakers are updated regularly.
- Remember that other Twelve Step fellowships are part of the public we are informing. Practice cooperation, not affiliation.
- Understand and be responsive to the needs of those we serve.
- Present a good image of recovery (be on time, dress appropriately, and avoid the use of obscenities.
- Work within the service structure to determine the feasibility of projects and to keep the lines of communication open.
- Make information packets available.
- If contacted by the media, always follow the established contingency plan.
- It is OK not to have an answer to every question. It is better to give no information than wrong information.

#### Don't's:

- Endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside organization.
- Overtax your human power and resources. Burn out on a project before it is completed creates a bad image of NA to the community and/or media.
- Overstep media boundaries as far as area/regional geography is concerned. When in doubt, ask!
- Do it by yourself. Remember the First Tradition and that the service structure is there to be used.

Never argue with those whose views differ with those of N.A.

### **Preparing for a speaking engagement**

Investigate your audience:

- What are their expectations, needs, etc.

#### **Plan:**

- Re-read this material
- Establish goals we want to present to the audience

#### **Practice:**

- Do a presentation to the PI Sub Committee

#### **Consider:**

- In addition to presenting information about N. A., you are demonstrating a living example of recovery.
- You may share briefly from your personal experience in such a way to enhance the presentation.
- Remember to focus on the fellowship, not on yourself.

## **Some Stuff You Probably Should Bring**

- Meeting schedules.
- Literature order forms.
- Basic text for display (and comfort).
- Appropriate literature provided by PR subcommittee.
- N.A. Way magazine.

## **Phoneline Volunteers**

A phoneline volunteer is an NA member whose primary objective is to direct the potential newcomer to an NA meeting, or direct questions about our fellowship to the appropriate subcommittee.

The first NA member the caller will come into contact with is usually the phoneline volunteer. The response and attitude of a volunteer can have a lasting impression on the caller. This is a service position of great responsibility.

Experience has shown that the most successful phoneline volunteers possess certain assets which are beneficial in the accomplishment of their responsibilities.

### **These qualifications include:**

1. A minimum of 6 months clean time.
2. Appropriate training (e.g. group orientation session, personal orientation, etc.).
3. A knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous, (e.g. the only requirement..., our only purpose.... never endorse related facilities...,nonprofessional..., no opinion on outside issues ..., attraction rather than promotion..., anonymity..., etc.).
4. The willingness to serve.
5. The willingness to give personal time.

Phone line volunteers may receive calls from NA members, potential newcomers, family and friends of addicts, and other people interested in NA { professionals, students, and members of the media). Keeping a log of telephone calls received is a method by which we may evaluate the services that we provide. Prepare the phoneline log that can be used to account for all calls received. This information should then be forwarded to the Helpline Coordinator.

Upon receiving a call, the first thing to determine is whether the caller is an addict seeking help. Calls from potential newcomers are, of course, the most important calls received by a phoneline volunteer.

The volunteer provides a brief introduction of the NA program and explains, in general, what the caller can expect at a meeting.

A phonenumber volunteer will need to use good judgment regarding these calls. Never give out the name, address, or telephone number of any member of the NA Fellowship. Do not use last names, places of employment, etc.

Calls from NA member are usually simple requests for meeting information. These should be answered quickly. Most members readily understand the need to keep the phonenumber open for other callers.

Calls from non-NA members, such as students, professionals, or community members, are usually requests for general information about NA. These also should be handled quickly. The caller can be advised that an informational packet is available. Then, the volunteer takes the name and address of the caller and refers this information to the Helpline Coordinator. Interested non-addicts can also be referred to open meetings.

If you are a volunteer, give callers who request presentations, special meetings, literature, activities, etc. a brief description of NA, explaining that these requests will be referred to the NA member designated to handle such calls.. Never make these types of commitments on your own. The phonenumber volunteer takes the name, number, etc. of the caller, completes, the Referral form, and passes it along accordingly.

### **Do's and Don'ts of phonenumber service:**

Do's:

- Do always identify yourself with your first name only and state that you're an addict.
- Do always have the necessary materials (meeting list, twelfth step list, phonenumber log, contingency plan, and regional contacts) close to the phone 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 the calls you answer.
- Do contact the Helpline Coordinator if problems arise.
- Do us Twelve Step List.

Don't's:

- 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 them to stop.
- Don't try to handle calls that you are not qualified to answer. Don't give medical advice or legal advice. (We are not counselors or lawyers).
- 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 a meeting, NA open to all age groups, etc.).
- Don't glorify active addiction by telling war stories.

