



Narcotics Anonymous[®]



**Institutional
Group Guide**

Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



Institutional Group Guide

Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc.
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Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in Narcotics Anonymous. This material has been designed to introduce you to some of the aspects of the program and Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as well as to provide an aid to beginning and maintaining a Narcotics Anonymous meeting in a long-term setting.

Narcotics Anonymous is a worldwide fellowship of men and women for whom drugs have become a major problem. NA is a program of recovery for anyone who has the desire to stop using drugs. We in NA know it did not matter which drugs we used or how much. What mattered is what happened when we used. Narcotics Anonymous is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. By following the program of recovery offered in Narcotics Anonymous, we have found a new way of life and become responsible, productive members of the society in which we live.

The Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous is based on the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, and the Twelve Concepts. Spiritual in nature, they are a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. Our Twelve Steps detail our program for personal recovery. Our Twelve Traditions relate experience that can help NA groups maintain their unity, and our Twelve Concepts are guiding principles for our service structure.

Narcotics Anonymous is not related to any other organizations, including other twelve-step fellowships, programs, treatment, or correctional facilities. We employ no professional counselors or therapists. NA is a nonprofit fellowship and our membership is free. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using; you are a member when you say you are, and membership in Narcotics Anonymous is unconditional.

It is our hope that this material will prove to be a simple, easy guide to your efforts in establishing an NA meeting. Section 1, *The Basics of an NA Meeting*, describes membership in NA, how to set up an NA meeting, and other information about maintaining your meeting. Section II, *The Group and Its Trusted Servants*, is designed for NA meetings that have become established groups. Section III, *The NA Service Structure*, explains what the service structure is, how NA functions, and how NA communicates internally. Section IV, *Resource Information*, covers other issues such as questions and suggestions, services NA does not provide, and explanations about many other issues that might be helpful to you.

We welcome you into Narcotics Anonymous, a worldwide fellowship. We are millions of recovering addicts who have found a vision of hope and a promise of freedom from active addiction. You are not alone. Just for today, you never have to use again.

SECTION I

THE BASICS

OF AN NA MEETING

Membership in Narcotics Anonymous

Membership in Narcotics Anonymous is a personal decision reached by each individual. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using drugs. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion. You are a member of the fellowship when you say you are.

Narcotics Anonymous has no initiation fees or dues. Each recovering addict has paid the price of membership through the pain of active addiction. Our message is that any addict can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Our message is one of hope and the promise of freedom from active addiction.

Most of us had no idea what to expect from living without the use of drugs. It is in NA meetings that many of us first heard the message of recovery, found acceptance and support from other members, and learned practical information to help us stay clean.

What is an NA Meeting?

A Narcotics Anonymous meeting is any two or more recovering addicts who meet together for the purpose of recovery from the disease of addiction. Narcotics Anonymous meetings are bound by the principles of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of NA. Our meetings are conducted by addicts, for addicts. NA is a personal and spiritual program; therefore, our personal recovery experiences, NA principles, and NA general information are the topics of our meetings.

The primary purpose of an NA meeting is to provide experience, strength and hope for its members and carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. The meeting provides each member with the opportunity to share and to hear the experience of other addicts who are learning to live a better way without the use of drugs. The meeting, in essence, is a vehicle by which our message is carried. It provides a setting in which a newcomer can identify with recovering addicts and can find an atmosphere of recovery.

Guidelines to Follow When Requesting a Meeting Place/Time

Some ideas to keep in mind when requesting space to hold an NA meeting are:

- The meeting place should be accessible to the largest number of people possible. Keep in mind that providing an atmosphere of recovery is desired; therefore, room size and possible distractions should be considered.

- Ramps, wide doors, elevators, and special bathroom facilities may be required for some members who are physically challenged.
- Generally, NA meetings are held in the evening after meals; this allows more people to attend.

It is recommended that NA group meetings not be held in an individual's living quarters. (See "Resource Section" for a sample letter requesting time and meeting space.)

Setting Up Your First NA Meeting

Once the meeting space and time have been approved, early arrival will allow time to set up chairs in a circle or around a table and set out the NA literature. Cleaning up after the meeting is also an important responsibility. Most of the things that an NA group does to host its meetings are pretty simple, but if one person had to do them all, these simple things would quickly become overwhelming. By dividing the work, the group ensures that the group as a whole is self-supporting and that the group's burdens don't settle unevenly on the shoulders of just one or two individuals. The spiritual principle of one addict helping another to fulfill our primary purpose is evident in our service to others.

Format for an NA Meeting

Narcotics Anonymous meetings follow a consistent format and often center around a topic of recovery called open discussion meetings. Other NA meetings might include a literature discussion, speaker meeting, or the Twelve Steps/Twelve Traditions/Twelve Concepts studies. Only Narcotics Anonymous Conference or Fellowship-approved literature and tapes are used in NA meetings. This is to ensure a clear, consistent, and focused message of recovery. Meetings usually last an hour or an hour-and-a-half, and it is important to start and end them on time.

Different Types of NA Meetings

Speaker Meeting

In a speaker meeting, one or more NA members share their experience, strength, and hope. This tends to lay out some basic symptoms and characteristics of the disease, and to show how NA has brought about recovery. A narrative of events accomplishes little, but a sharing of feelings, self-image, turning points, new awareness, etc., carries a message of recovery.

Open Discussion Meeting

Topics should be chosen carefully with the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts in mind. There are a multitude of topics that relate to our personal recovery in NA. It is important to remember that recovery from addiction is our purpose for attending meetings and to choose topics accordingly. The following list is only a beginning point. Many other recovery-based topics come to mind as the group develops and meets the needs of its members.

Some Suggested Topics

- Any IP or selection from the Basic Text
- HOW (honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness)
- Surrender
- Acceptance
- The basics (Don't use, meetings, phone numbers, literature, sponsor, and the steps)
- HALTS (Don't get too hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or serious)
- Responsible for our own recovery
- Freedom from active addiction
- Identify rather than compare
- Spiritual, not religious, program
- Going to any length to stay clean
- Transition from the facility to the fellowship (*if applicable*)
- Tools of the fellowship
- Letting go
- Feelings
- Learning to trust
- Giving up old playmates, playgrounds, and playthings
- Living just for today
- The first three steps
- Denial
- Reservations
- Sponsorship

Literature Discussion

For a literature discussion meeting, parts of the Basic Text or other conference or fellowship-approved literature are read and discussed. This format may include study of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and the Twelve Concepts. Passing the literature around and allowing everyone a chance to read can be an easy way for everyone to get involved. If you do that though, be sure to include a statement such as "Feel free to pass the literature along if you'd rather not read." Not everyone is willing or able to read aloud.

Sample Meeting Format

This sample meeting format is just that: a sample. It's designed so that, if your group chooses, you can use it exactly as it is. However, you're encouraged to change it and

rearrange it according to the needs of your group. It may be a good idea to contact the local area service committee to see how most of the groups in your area format their meetings.

Chairperson:

Welcome members to the meeting and introduce yourself. “Hello, my name is ___ and I am an addict. Welcome to this meeting of the ___ Group of Narcotics Anonymous. I’d like to open this meeting with a moment of silence (15 to 20 seconds) for the addict who still suffers, followed by the Serenity Prayer. We like to extend a special welcome to newcomers. Is there anyone attending his or her first NA meeting? Would you like to introduce yourself? Is there anyone attending this meeting for the first time?”

If this is a closed meeting: “This is a ‘closed’ Narcotics Anonymous meeting. ‘Closed’ NA meetings are only for addicts or those who think they might have a drug problem. Closed meetings provide an atmosphere in which addicts feel more certain that those attending will be able to identify with them. If there are any nonaddicts visiting, we’d like to thank you for your interest in Narcotics Anonymous. Our local NA meeting list on the literature table will direct you to an NA meeting in our community that is open to nonaddicts.”

If this is an open meeting: “This is an ‘open’ Narcotics Anonymous meeting, which means that non-addict friends, relatives, and community members are welcome to attend. Other NA meetings may be closed to nonaddicts. We’d like to welcome our visitors, and thank you for your interest in Narcotics Anonymous. We ask that you respect the primary purpose of this meeting, which is to provide a place where drug addicts can share their recovery with one another.”

Chairperson:

You may want to read an anonymity statement at the beginning of an open meeting. A sample anonymity statement appears immediately following this sample meeting format.

Continue:

“For the protection of our group as well as the meeting facility, we ask that no drugs, or drug paraphernalia be on your person at the meeting. It costs you nothing to belong to Narcotics Anonymous. You are a member when you say you are.”

Chairperson:

Recognize those with various periods of clean time. Keytags, chips, or medallions may be given out. (See page 27 for an explanation) Select people before the meeting to read one or more of the following short pieces. These readings can be found in our Little White Booklet, the Basic Text, IP #1, or the Group Reading Cards.

- Who Is an Addict?
- What is the NA Program?
- Why Are We Here?
- How It Works
- The Twelve Traditions
- Just for Today
- We Do Recover

Chairperson:

Ask for topic or step discussion and call on people to share or introduce the speaker.

Chairperson:

About ten minutes before the meeting is scheduled to close, announce: “That’s all the time we have. I’d like to thank you for attending.”

Chairperson:

Begin passing the basket around (if applicable), announcing: “The basket being passed around is one way of practicing our Seventh Tradition, which says, ‘Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.’ The money we collect pays for rent, NA literature, and refreshments. Through contributions from this group to various NA service committees, it also helps carry the NA message of recovery in our area and around the world.”

If this is an “open” meeting: “ I’d like once again to thank our non-addict guests for the interest they’ve shown in Narcotics Anonymous. Because of NA’s tradition of self-support, this group asks that you not contribute any money when the basket passes your way.”

Chairperson

“Does the group service representative have any announcements? (The GSR will make announcements of upcoming group activities and NA events in the area.)”

After the basket has come back around: “Again, thanks for coming tonight. Would all those who wish to, join in a circle to close?” (Various groups close in different ways: with prayers, brief reflections from NA literature, etc., and often with the words “Keep coming back. It works.”)

NA group members share responsibilities such as cleaning up the room after the meeting. We try to leave the room better than we found it. This helps protect the atmosphere of recovery and the reputation of Narcotics Anonymous.

Sample Anonymity Statement

NA’s Eleventh Tradition reads, “Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.” We ask everyone attending to respect our members’ anonymity by not using full-face photographs, last names, or personal details when describing this meeting to others.

The Difference Between “Open” and “Closed” NA Meetings

“Closed” NA meetings are only for addicts or those who think they might have a drug problem. Closed meetings provide an atmosphere in which recovering addicts can feel more certain that those attending will be able to identify with them. The chairperson often reads a statement at the beginning of a closed meeting, explaining why the meeting is closed and offering to direct nonaddicts who may be attending to an open meeting.

“Open” NA meetings are just that: open to anyone who wants to attend. Some groups have open meetings once a month to allow non-addict friends and relatives of NA members to celebrate recovery anniversaries/birthdays with them. It should be made clear during the meeting that NA groups do not accept monetary contributions from nonaddicts.

Our Relationship with the Facility

Communications with the administration will be an important factor in maintaining a good relationship with the facility. It is important to exchange information with the facility at all stages of planning and on an ongoing basis. This is best done in writing. Although the staff’s designated contact person may be on the administrative level, week-to-week interaction will most likely be with other staff. A positive relationship with these staff members will make it much easier to deal with any difficulties that may come up.

Often staff members are required by the facility to attend the NA meeting, or even chair the first few meetings. It should be made clear, not only at the initial stage of setting up the meeting, but also on an ongoing basis, that their role will be as observers only. This also applies if the staff member is a member of NA. This will help ensure that our relationship is one of cooperation and not affiliation.

Our Sixth Tradition states that “an NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise; lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.” Our primary purpose is solely to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. The principles by which we recover become diluted when we do not uphold the Twelve Traditions.

Narcotics Anonymous does not keep attendance records or case histories, nor do we monitor and report on residents’ behavior. This is the responsibility of the staff. NA does not engage in drug education or provide domestic counseling, or provide letters of referral or recommendations to parole boards, attorneys or court officials. Nor do our members participate on social councils or grievance committees under the name of Narcotics Anonymous. It has been our experience that adherence to the simple principles of Narcotics Anonymous is invaluable in avoiding controversy and misunderstanding and has enabled many people to find a simple recovery program that works in their lives.

SECTION II

THE GROUP AND ITS TRUSTED SERVANTS

The Group

An NA group is any meeting which meets regularly at a specified place and time, providing that it follows the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, and the Twelve Concepts (has no outside affiliations and receives no outside financial support). To facilitate communications and unity and to better serve NA as a whole, groups should register with the World Service Office of Narcotics Anonymous.

The primary purpose of an NA group is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. However, it also provides to all members the chance to express themselves and to hear the recovery experiences of other members who are learning how to live a better life drug-free.

Groups hold two basic types of meetings: those which are open to the general public and those closed to the public (for addicts only). Meetings vary widely in format from group to group: participation meetings, speaker, question and answer, topic discussion, and some have a combination of these formats. Despite the type of format a group uses in its meetings, the function of a group is always the same: to provide a suitable and reliable environment for personal recovery and to promote such recovery.

A group has proven to be the most successful vehicle for Twelfth Step work. After sharing one's personal recovery experience, strength and hope, the most valuable thing a member can do is to bring prospective new members (addicts) to a group meeting. In this way, a group meeting becomes a place where newcomers know they can come for help. Often the first thing that can open the doors of recovery for addicts is the recognition of themselves in others. A group provides a setting in which the newcomer can find this identification by hearing a number of recovering addicts, rather than just one or two, share their NA recovery experience.

The group is the level at which we first find some of the day-to-day business of NA being taken care of. There may be literature to buy and distribute, coffee to be provided, a meeting place to be kept clean, a time schedule to follow, announcements to be made, and other things to be done for the maintenance of a group. A group should stay in contact with their ASC/RSC, if at all possible, so it may become informed about resources, get new literature, and find out what is going on throughout the fellowship.

It is at a group level that the principle of the trusted servant comes into being: Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern. The trusted servants of a group are

elected by a majority vote of the group conscience. They are a) the secretary, b) the treasurer, and c) the group service representative and GSR-alt.

There are a couple of things to consider when looking for a trusted servant. One is maturity in recovery and working knowledge of the Twelve Steps. When those new in recovery are elected to a position, they may find themselves deprived of time and energy they need for their early recovery. Group members with a year or two clean are probably already well established in their personal recovery. They are also more likely than new members to be familiar with NA's Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts as well as group procedures.

A second thing to consider is a member's consistent participation in the group. Does he or she they attend meetings regularly? Does he or she take an active part in the group's business meetings? Those who have demonstrated their commitment to the group by showing up every week will probably make better trusted servants than those who only attend sporadically.

When a vacancy occurs in a group position, the group holds a business meeting to consider how to fill it. In keeping with the principle of electing trusted servants through the group's conscience, most NA groups use a simple nomination and election procedure in selecting new trusted servants. Keep in mind that the group's trusted servants are directly responsible to the group.

Group secretary

A secretary is responsible for the day-to-day functions of a group. It is his or her responsibility to assure that the group meeting takes place when and where it is supposed to and that the meeting begins and ends on time. The secretary may select a chairperson for each meeting, make sure the coffee is ready, arrange for group business meetings, arrange for the celebration of NA anniversaries/birthdays, make sure that the meeting hall is left in proper order, and answer all correspondence. This job is important because the services performed by the secretary help provide an atmosphere of recovery.

Group Treasurer

A treasurer of an NA group is responsible for the funds which come into a group from the collection, and for the handling and distribution of these funds. The money collected in our meetings should be carefully budgeted. There are numerous expenses necessary for running a group. The treasurer distributes money to purchase literature, provide coffee, buy supplies, and cover the cost of any miscellaneous expenses a group may incur. He or she keeps an accurate record of all the groups' financial transactions. In order to maintain our fellowship and freedom, monies that come from a group's collections and members' contributions must always be used to further our primary purpose. A group must first support itself.

After paying its bills, any remaining funds should be placed in a group bank account, accumulating a reserve adequate to run a group for one month. After this "prudent

reserve” has been established, excess funds should be directed to the area service committee. In cases where there is no access to an ASC, send this balance to your regional service committee (RSC). If no access to an RSC exists, send this balance to the Narcotics Anonymous World Services, care of the World Service Office. One of the biggest problems we have faced has been the misuse of a group’s money. Holding on to excess funds often causes disunity within the group, and can be a negative distraction to the treasurer. This abuse severely limits what the NA Fellowship can offer to recovering addicts. A treasurer has an important responsibility, and much thought should be given to selecting a member to perform this function (also see the *Treasurer’s Handbook*).

As a general rule, we have found that the treasurer and secretary are most successful if they have certain assets necessary for the performance of their responsibilities. These qualifications include:

- The willingness and desire to serve.
- A suggested minimum of one year continuous abstinence from all drugs.
- Knowledge of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions.
- Active participation in the group they are to serve.

In certain settings it is not possible to collect money for group support, or the need to pay for rent. We can make compensation for use of the meeting space, coffee supplies, and literature in different ways. Some may make a newsletter for the whole community, while others may as a group pitch in together to do some maintenance or other tasks. Still, others may produce items with their artistic talents for trade.

Group Service Representative (GSR)

A Group Service Representative (GSR) is responsible for the following:

- Serving as a liaison between the group and the area service committee.
- Sending reports to the ASC regularly (either in person or by mail).
- Sharing responsibilities with the GSR-alternate.
- Keeping the group accurately registered with the World Service Office.
- Consistent participation in group.
- Knowledge of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of NA Service.

The most important facet of this position is to be the communicator for the group. The group service representative is the vital link between the group and the rest of the service structure.

Group Service Representative–Alternate (GSR-Alternate)

The position of GSR-Alternate parallels that of GSR except that it is a two-year commitment with the first year spent in training and the second year as GSR. The GSR-Alternate also acts as GSR in the absence of the GSR.

Chairperson for the NA Meetings

The chairperson should have recovery experience, strength, and hope to share, which he or she has gained from regular attendance at Narcotics Anonymous meetings. This person is responsible for keeping the discussion moving smoothly and following the group format. The chairperson should remember that it is everybody's meeting. The chairperson should refrain from commenting after each person shares and discourage other members from doing so.

The person chairing the meeting is responsible for establishing an atmosphere of recovery. In NA it does not matter which drugs we used or how much; what matters is what happened to us when we used. Although sharing some problems is necessary for identification, sharing solutions is necessary for recovery. It should always be in the chairperson's mind that we are here for the specific purpose of staying clean and helping other addicts to find recovery from addiction.

Most groups rotate the chairperson every month. This allows other NA members of the group a chance to chair the meeting. Generally, a minimum of three months continuous abstinence from all drugs is suggested for the chairperson. In some facilities the staff may require that the person chairing the first few meetings be a counselor or social worker. It is recommended that NA meetings be chaired by NA members as soon as possible.

Home Group

In some NA communities, it has become customary for members of the fellowship to make a personal commitment to support one particular group—their “home group.” The home group is one very specific way in which, by making a personal commitment to NA unity, group members can enhance their own recovery as well as ensure that the same opportunity exists for others. The home group is the place where the individual member of Narcotics Anonymous has an opportunity to express his or her personal conscience in the development of our primary purpose on all levels of service.

Rotation and Continuity of Trusted Servants

Rotation is the practice many groups have of electing new people to service positions at set intervals rather than having the same person serve in the same position time after time. Rotation offers very definite benefits for the groups who practice it. By providing diversity in leadership, it helps a group to stay fresh and energetic. It provides assurance that no one individual exercise so much influence that the group becomes a mere extension of his or her personality. The practice of rotation also reinforces the NA emphasis on service rather than the servant. Consistent with our belief in the value of spiritual anonymity—what's important is the job being done, not the particular person doing it.

Occasionally some groups allow their members to serve more than one term of a given position so that the group can take advantage of its trusted servants' experience. When group officers have completed their terms, rotation allows them to step aside

for a time, or accept responsibilities elsewhere in the NA service structure, giving other members the chance to serve the group.

The impact of rotation on the stability of the group is balanced by the continuing presence of its long-term group members. Those who have served in the past as group officers and continue to maintain an active role in the life of the group can provide experience, strength and hope to a growing group's discussions. They can also lend a hand to new officers and temporarily pitch in to relieve overloaded trusted servants.

Conducting a Group Business Meeting

The purpose of the group business meeting is fairly self-explanatory: to conduct the business of the group in such a way that the group remains effective in carrying the recovery message. Group conscience meetings are usually held monthly. Some of the questions a typical group business meeting addresses are:

- Is the group effective in carrying the NA message?
- Are newcomers being made welcome?
- Do solutions for problems at recent meetings need to be sought?
- Is the meeting format providing sufficient direction?
- Is attendance steady or growing?
- Are there good relations between the group and the facility in which the meeting is held?
- Are the group's funds being used wisely?
- Are literature and coffee supplies holding up?
- Is there a service vacancy in the group?
- Has the area, the region, or the World Service Conference asked the group for advice or support?
- Would a change in the format strengthen the recovery atmosphere?
- What can we do to make meetings more accessible to more addicts?
- Is our group following the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Narcotics Anonymous?

Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual program. A group's business meeting should also be spiritual. We need to develop a group conscience during these meetings. Group conscience is the means by which we collectively invite the ongoing guidance of a Higher Power in making decisions. When addicts whose individual conscience has been awakened in the course of working the steps come together to consider service-related questions, either in their NA group or in any service committee meeting, they are prepared to take a part in the development of a group conscience.

We often use the vote as a rough tool for translating that spiritual guidance into clear decisive terms. Often after following thoughtful attentive discussion, no vote is needed, the group conscience becomes perfectly apparent. This is the spiritual premise of our

Sixth Concept for NA service. We need to be ever attentive to it in making service-related decisions.

Sample Group Business Meeting Agenda

Most NA groups' business meetings run much more smoothly when a meeting agenda has been planned ahead of time. The following is a suggested sample. Although no two groups are the same, our experience shows that this format can work well for most. This will help the group do those other things it needs to do in an organized manner.

Group Name
Business Meeting Agenda

Date _____ Time _____

1. Opening prayer
2. Read the Twelve Traditions & Twelve Concepts
3. Review & approval of minutes from last meeting
4. Treasurer's report
5. GSR report
6. Old business (items that carried over from previous meeting)
7. New business
8. Elections (if applicable)
9. Announcements (NA related)
10. Closing prayer

SECTION III

THE NA

SERVICE STRUCTURE

Our Main Lines of Communication

Once your group has been registered with the World Service Office (forms are located in “Section IV”), your group may wish to participate in mailings, questionnaires and the decision-making processes of Narcotics Anonymous. Because we are a vast worldwide fellowship, our lines of communication are kept simple and basic with our common welfare as the main link that bonds us together. The following diagram illustrates this process along with some brief descriptions of their various functions.

MEMBER – GROUP – AREA – REGION – WSC – WORLD BOARD



Member

The front line, so to speak, of NA service is an individual NA member. Any addict may be a member, the only requirement is a desire to stop using. The services that each of us provides are the most important in NA. It is the member who carries our message of recovery and works with others. Without an active membership there would be no need for the rest of the service structure; there would be no NA.

The benefits of membership are clear to us all: a drug-free life, the chance to grow, friendship, and freedom from active addiction. However, membership is not without its responsibilities. It is the responsibility of all members to maintain their personal recovery. Also, it is the responsibility of each of us to share freely our recovery experience, strength and hope with an addict who still suffers, and work to ensure that what was freely given to us remains available to the newcomer and older members alike.

Group

The gathering together of two or more recovering addicts for the purpose of learning how to live a drug-free life by practicing the principles of NA constitutes an NA meeting. When such a meeting is held regularly, it can become a group. (For more discussion on NA groups, see page 11)

Group Service Representatives Area Service Committee Participation

Group service representatives link their groups with the rest of the NA service structure. The GSR's primary communication responsibility is to represent the group's conscience in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole. This duty requires the representative to provide information to the group about developments in the worldwide NA Fellowship and to share with the area any activities, strengths, or problems of the group. It is important that the GSR maintain the chain of NA communications. The actual connection may be accomplished in several ways. Some examples are:

1. Your elected GSR may be able to attend the ASC through various means according to facility rules.
2. If actual attendance is not always possible, communications can be accomplished through the mail. This can include group concerns, group activities, and group conscience votes, as well as the group's participation in other areas of the service structure.
3. If members from the outside NA Fellowship become regular participants of your meeting, one of these may become, if the group wishes, your GSR and attend the ASC as the group representative.
4. In some cases, the ASC may ask to hold the meeting in your facility (if possible).

Brief Description of an NA Area

An area is a collection of groups joined together to further the primary purpose of the member groups and NA as a whole. This is done by all of the groups working together and taking action according to the conscience of those groups. Many groups are able to accomplish what a single group might find difficult to do on its own. An area service committee (ASC) is a committee made up of representatives (GSRs) from groups within a designated area, which meets monthly for the purpose of serving the specific needs of its member groups.

Brief Description of an NA Region

A regional service committee (RSC) is a committee made up of the RCMs (see "glossary" for description) from all the areas within a designated region. This service committee is designed to provide service to its member areas. An ASC and an RSC are similar in nature and purpose, but their respective functions are slightly different. While an ASC serves the specific needs of the groups, an RSC serves the common needs of the areas. The primary function of an RSC is to unify the areas within its region. Another function is to carry the NA message of recovery through an ever widening circle of resources, i.e., individual members make up a group, individual groups make up an area, individual areas make up a region, working together to fulfill our primary purpose of carrying the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

Zone or National Assembly

A zonal forum and/or a national assembly is a group of regions that meet together. Examples include the European Conference, the Canadian Assembly, and the Western States Forum.

World Service Conference (WSC)

The World Service Conference is established by and is responsible to the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. Its purpose is to be supportive of the fellowship as a whole, and to define and implement the policies of Narcotics Anonymous. The World Service Conference does this by joining the members, groups, areas, and regions into a unified fellowship, by dealing with the problems and the needs of the fellowship, and by actively encouraging the primary purpose and growth of Narcotics Anonymous.

Each conference cycle, the WSC addresses fellowship concerns in the *World Service Conference Agenda Report*. This gives individual members the opportunity to address specific issues pertaining to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as a whole.

World Board (WB)

The World Board is the service board of the World Service Conference. It provides support to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous in their efforts to provide the opportunity to recover from addiction; and oversees the activities of NA World Services, including our primary service center, the World Service Office. The board also holds in trust for the NA Fellowship the rights for all their physical and intellectual properties (which includes literature, logos, trademarks, and copyrights) in accordance with the will of the WSC.

World Service Office (WSO)

One of the most important functions of the WSO is to link our widespread groups and members into a single, cohesive fellowship. Another major function of the WSO is the publication and distribution of literature. Along with files and records, the WSO also keeps the archives of NA's history. Another WSO function is that of public relations. The World Service Office is our fellowship's main service center. To meet our needs as a growing fellowship, our services need to operate as efficiently and effectively as possible within the spiritual principles of the NA program. [For more in-depth discussion on the service structure please refer to *A Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous* (GLS), and *A Guide to World Services in Narcotics Anonymous* (GWSNA)].

SECTION IV

RESOURCE INFORMATION

Narcotics Anonymous Anniversaries/Birthdays

NA clean-time anniversaries (some groups call them birthdays) are a yearly celebration of a member's complete abstinence from all drugs. Whether it is called a member's anniversary or birthday, it is a joyful marking of a member's personal recovery and a demonstration that the program of Narcotics Anonymous works. These occasions provide an opportunity for the expression of gratitude, strength, and hope that are encouraging to newcomers as well as older members.

Some groups enjoy celebrating the anniversary of their first NA meeting. These anniversaries demonstrate the stability of the group, promote unity between members, and enable all members to celebrate recovery. For this occasion, some groups choose to hold an open meeting with Narcotics Anonymous speakers and invite others to share in their new drug-free way of life.

Chips and Keytags or Records

Commemorative chips and keytags are not appropriate in some institutional meetings for a variety of reasons; more important, we do not compromise a member's anonymity due to a loss of continuous clean time. This also applies to groups keeping any records of NA members' names, clean-time dates, or attendance at meetings. Chips and keytags are available (see literature order form), if the group wants and is able to make them available.

Sponsorship

A sponsor is a recovering addict in the program of Narcotics Anonymous; someone we can trust to share our life experiences with (both positive and negative); a person to whom we can go with our problems that may be too personal to share with the group.

It is suggested that a sponsor be someone who has practice in working the Twelve Steps and is involved in the program. Primarily, a sponsor is a guide through the Twelve Steps of recovery. It is strongly recommended that a sponsor have at least one year clean.

It is strongly suggested that we find a sponsor of the same sex. Experience has shown us that members of the same sex better understand certain issues such as sexuality, family or identity problems, relationship problems, and can best help us keep the focus on recovery.

Sometimes sponsorship is not possible because of factors such as location or regulations of the facility. Regardless of sponsor availability, we continue to be

responsible for our recovery by staying clean, working the steps to the best of our ability, attending meetings regularly, and reading NA literature. With the guidance of our Higher Power, we seek to practice the spiritual principles of recovery in all aspects of our lives. We ask God *as we understand Him*, to enable us to live according to God's will for us, just for today.

For more information on sponsorship, see IP #11, *Sponsorship*, which is also in the *Introductory Guide to Narcotics Anonymous*. For those anticipating release from the facility, please see *Staying Clean on the Outside*, IP #23.

Questions and Suggestions that May Come Up in Your Group

- Q.** *What can we do when someone in the meeting wants to discuss their guilt or innocence or discuss the rules of the facility and the staff?* Remind all in attendance that the purpose of an NA meeting is to provide an atmosphere for recovery from the disease of addiction and to carry the message of recovery to the addicts who still suffer.
- Q.** *What do we do if drugs, paraphernalia, or weapons are displayed at the meeting?* What if a fight breaks out? Disband the meeting immediately. Narcotics Anonymous meetings must always be a safe place for members to experience recovery. Inform the staff that the meeting is over for today but that you will be back for the next meeting.
- Q.** *What can we do when a member of a different organization wants to speak at our meeting?* Thank them for their interest in NA but explain that our primary purpose is recovery from drug addiction through the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, and the Twelve Concepts of Narcotics Anonymous. This also applies to any other literature that is not conference-approved NA literature.
- Q.** *What if a staff member is present during a meeting?* The presence or absence of a staff member is up to the facility. However, if the meetings are continually disruptive, requesting a staff member to be present might be advisable.
- Q.** *What can we do if a facility's policy is a violation of our traditions?* Occasionally problems arise because facilities do not understand our traditions or the nature and function of NA in general. Usually this can be avoided or handled successfully. Facilities cannot "violate" traditions; they do not have traditions. The responsibility for upholding our traditions, or choosing to participate in situations which compromise them is ours alone. The Twelve Traditions of NA are not negotiable. They are the guidelines that keep our fellowship alive and free.

Questions and Suggestions that May Come Up in Your Group Business Meeting

- Q.** *How can a group solve its problems?* One of the best ways a group can solve the various problems that may arise is to remain focused on our primary purpose, which is solely to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

Remaining mindful that practicing the spiritual principles contained in the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts solves most of any group's problems. In other cases the group may seek suggestions from other groups they are in contact with or write a letter expressing concerns the group has to their area service committee, seeking experience, strength, and hope in solving difficult problems. It is important to note that other parts of our service structure are not responsible for settling a group's disputes except in matters that affect other NA groups or NA as a whole. Please see the Fourth Tradition for further explanations.

- Q. *Do we charge money for the pamphlets we put out on the literature table?* A group's primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. As such, the group's funds pay for the purchase of pamphlets, which are usually given out free-of-charge. However, more expensive literature such as books may be sold by the group at cost. NA is a nonprofit fellowship.
- Q. *Since we are in a facility, how can our group participate in other areas of the fellowship?* Depending upon the rules and regulations of the facility, a group can look for ways to participate in carrying the message of recovery. One of the best ways to do this is to stay in close contact with the area and regional service committees. There may be ways in which your group can participate on area or regional projects, committees, reports, NA newsletters, etc. Asking "How may we help?" is the best way to get involved.

Services not provided by Narcotics Anonymous

- NA does not provide legal assistance, medical advice, professional counseling, or group therapy. We are not related to any other twelve-step fellowships, treatment or correctional facilities, or any religious affiliates.

—*Tradition Six and Tradition Eight*

- NA does not endorse or lend the NA name, registered trademarks, or logos to outside enterprises. NA literature is protected under international copyright laws. For more information on this issue please see *The Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust*.

—*Tradition Six*

- NA does not keep attendance records or case histories.

—*Tradition Twelve*

- NA members do not participate on social councils or grievance committees on behalf of Narcotics Anonymous.

—*Tradition Six*

- NA does not provide drug detoxification or engage in drug education. NA does not provide certificates of graduation from drug programs.

—*Tradition Six*

- NA does not conduct or participate in medical research or behavioral experiments.

—*Tradition Ten*

- NA does not provide housing, food, clothing, money, or other social services.

—*Tradition Five, Tradition Six,
and Tradition Eleven*

- NA does not provide vocational counseling or job placement.

—*Tradition Eight*

- NA does not provide letters or recommendations to parole boards attorneys, court officials, physicians, therapists, employers, or social service agencies on behalf of NA members.

—*Tradition Six, Tradition Eight,
and Tradition Eleven*

- NA does not sanction the public notoriety of a member's name, photograph, personal story, or filmed depictions in relation to membership in Narcotics Anonymous.

—*Tradition Ten, Tradition Eleven,
and Tradition Twelve*

Additional Needs For Disabled Members

General Preparation

Find out what materials are available through the World Service Office to assist addicts with additional needs. Update your current stockpile of Narcotics Anonymous materials to include the items for addicts with additional needs.

Hearing-impaired

- Speak directly full-face, speak slowly, and distinctly.
- A sign interpreter must have clear eye contact between the speaker and the hearing-impaired.
- When lip reading is necessary, hearing-impaired addicts will need to sit close to the speaker and not have their view obstructed by obstacles such as people, poles, etc.
- Keep pencil and pad handy during all meetings with hearing-impaired persons. This is a simple and easy way to ensure that hearing and non-hearing addicts can communicate with each other. It is important to remember that dramatic facial expressions while speaking are very helpful to members who read lips.

Visually Impaired

- Do not touch blind addicts without their permission. They cannot see you coming, and it can be a frightening experience for them.
- Before helping a blind person, be sure to ask if they need help.
- Only about ten percent of the blind read Braille.
- As a preparation for helping blind addicts, it might be helpful to sit through a meeting with your eyes closed to get a feel for their experience.

Physically Challenged

- Inform appropriate staff in facilities of the accessibility of Narcotics Anonymous to physically challenged addicts.
- When carrying the message to the physically challenged, we need to consider accessibility, i.e., bathrooms, ramps, and other necessities. Bathrooms, ramps, and other necessities are considerations when planning meetings.

Residents on Medications

Narcotics Anonymous is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. We have no opinion on outside issues and our approach is nonprofessional. So, we must be very sure that it is understood that we do not advocate going against a physician's advice; neither do we endorse the use of any drug.

In facilities which provide medication, residents inevitably ask the question "Am I clean if the doctor has me on medication?" When the question comes up, it is important not to judge. Based on our Eighth and Tenth Traditions, we are not in a position to discuss the issue. As NA members, we should not tell residents to stop taking their medications; we are not doctors. We can only tell them to keep coming back (they are welcome at meetings) and to read NA literature. Our Third Tradition allows us to experience humility, compassion, and tolerance for all who come to NA seeking recovery from addiction to drugs. The booklet, *In Times of Illness*, addresses important issues on this subject.

Sample Letters

Sample Letter Requesting Time and Place For an NA Meeting

Date

Administrator

Name of Facility

PO Box 7890

Anywhere, State 23456

To Whom it may Concern:

We are writing to you to request permission to begin a Narcotics Anonymous meeting in our facility. Narcotics Anonymous is a worldwide fellowship for those whose use or desire to use drugs has become a major problem in their lives, and they want to do something about it. NA is a twelve-step program of recovery based on spiritual principles. Anyone may join NA regardless of age, race, sexual identity, religion, or lack of religion. There are no dues, fees, or any other requirements other than to seek recovery from addiction to drugs. NA is a nonprofit program of recovery that is not connected to any other twelve-step fellowship or treatment programs, and has no religious affiliations.

We are also requesting that you, or a member of the staff, allocate a time and a room in which the meeting might be held. Generally, NA meetings are held at a time when the largest number of addicts can attend. We believe that by beginning an NA meeting in our facility and by following the spiritual program set forth in Narcotics Anonymous, many of us will be able to experience recovery on an ongoing basis. We are available to meet with you at your convenience to discuss these matters and, hopefully, provide any other information about Narcotics Anonymous you may request.

Thank you for your attention to this letter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

(name of person to contact in response)

**Sample Letter To ASC
From An NA Group Inside A Facility**

Date

Name of Group

Box 7890

Anywhere, State 23456

Dear Area Service Committee:

Greetings from the (Name of group) Narcotics Anonymous group at (name of institution). We have a desire to become a part of your area to better enhance our recovery. Our group follows the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of NA.

Please contact the undersigned with any assistance you can give us in that regard. We need your help to further help ourselves, and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Name of group contact



NEW GROUP REGISTRATION/UPDATE FORM


This form can be completed online at www.na.org/?ID=updateforms-newregfm

Visit www.na.org/?ID=subscribe or call 818.773.9999 x771 for information about free communications from NAWS

Please complete all information (Please print clearly)

Group Code (if known)	Today's Date
Group Name	
This group was formed (month/year)	This group holds _____ meeting(s) per week
Area Service Committee Name	
Regional Service Committee Name	

Group's Meeting Information

Meeting Days	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
Meeting Time							
Language(s)							
Format							
Wheelchair Accessible 							
Room Name							
Open/Closed*							

*Open NA meetings welcome addicts and interested observers; closed NA meetings welcome addicts only.

Meeting Location

	OLD (if applicable)	NEW
Place / Building Name		
Address		
City		
Borough / Sub-City		
State/Province		
Zip/Postal & Country		

If this meeting is held in a correctional or treatment facility, are there special criteria for entry?

Group Contact Mailing Address

This is typically a stable group member who can forward any communication from NA World Services to the NA group.

This may or may not be a current group trusted servant, and is not usually the group's meeting location address.

Group Contact Name (first and last)			
Address			
City		State/Province	
Postal/Zip	Country	Phone ()	
Email Address			

GLOSSARY

Additional needs, addicts with. Additional needs arise from physical challenges such as blindness, hearing impairment, or mobility limitations imposed by use of wheelchairs. Reaching addicts with additional needs and making our meetings and other services more accessible to them is an obligation our fellowship takes very seriously at all levels of its service structure.

Area service committee (ASC). A committee created to provide common services for NA groups in a specific locale. Composed of GSRs, ASC officers, and subcommittee chairpersons. Usually part of a region, to which it sends RCMs.

Closed meetings. NA recovery meetings that are closed to nonaddicts.

Common needs (special interests). A name tag referring to specialized groups formed to provide additional identification for addicts with particular needs or interests in common—for example, men’s or women’s groups and gay or lesbian groups.

Conference-approved service material. Material approved by the World Service Conference that is intended primarily for use within the context of an NA service board or committee.

Fellowship-approved literature. See *NA-approved literature*.

Group service representative (GSR). Elected by an NA group to participate on the group’s behalf in the ASC and the regional assembly.

GSR. See *group service representative*.

H&I. See *hospitals and institutions*.

Home group. The group an NA member calls “home.” Home group membership calls for regular attendance of its recovery meetings, financial and voluntary service support, and participation in conscience-building and decision-making processes.

Hospitals and Institutions (H&I). A field of service usually covered by one ASC subcommittee devoted to carrying the NA message primarily to correctional inmates and treatment facility patients.

NA Way Magazine, The. The NA Fellowship’s quarterly journal, published in various languages.

NA-approved literature. Recovery literature officially sanctioned by the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as given voice by its groups through their delegates to the World Service Conference. Also referred to as “fellowship-approved literature.”

Narcotics Anonymous World Services (NAWS). Refers to Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc., the legal name for the World Board. (See World Board description.)

Open meetings. NA recovery meetings that allow attendance by nonaddicts.

Phoneline. An NA telephone contact service providing means by which an addict or a general community member can get information about Nar-

cotics Anonymous, especially NA meeting schedules. Usually administered by an ASC subcommittee.

PI. See *public information*.

Public information (PI). A field of service usually covered by one ASC subcommittee devoted to carrying the NA message to government and private agencies, the public media, community leaders, those in the helping professions, and the community-at-large so that addicts seeking recovery will be referred to Narcotics Anonymous.

RCM. See *regional committee member*.

Regional assembly. A gathering of GSRs and RCMs, conducted by the RSC, to discuss issues affecting NA worldwide, usually in preparation for the annual WSC meeting. The regional delegate is elected at the assembly.

Regional committee member (RCM). Elected by an ASC to participate on the area's behalf on the regional service committee.

Regional delegate. A World Service Conference participant elected by a region's GSRs and RCMs.

Regional service committee (RSC). A body that draws together the combined service experience of a number of adjoining areas for those areas' mutual support. Composed of RCMs, the regional delegate and alternate delegate, and others as needed.

RSC. See *regional service committee*.

Service bulletins. Articles, position papers, and food for thought on a variety of NA service-related topics. A number of such bulletins are available from our World Service Office.

Special interests (common needs). A name tag referring to specialized groups formed to provide additional identification for addicts with particular needs or interests in common—for example, men's or women's groups and gay or lesbian groups.

Trusted servant. An NA euphemism for "leader," "official," or "officer." Derived from NA's Second Tradition, in which NA leaders are characterized as "trusted servants" as opposed to governors.

Twelve Concepts for NA Service. One of three bodies of basic NA principles, the concepts apply specifically to the development, coordination, and maintenance of NA services on behalf of the groups.

Twelve Steps. One of three bodies of basic NA principles, the steps describe NA's regimen leading to personal recovery and a spiritual awakening.

Twelve Traditions. One of three bodies of basic NA principles, the traditions provide guidance for the behavior of NA groups, helping the groups maintain their independence while nurturing their unity.

World Board. The World Board is the service board of the World Service Conference. It provides support to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous

in their efforts to provide the opportunity to recover from addiction; and oversees the activities of NA world services, including our primary service center, the World Service Office. The board also holds in trust for the NA Fellowship the rights for all their physical and intellectual properties (which includes literature, logos, trademarks, and copyrights) in accordance with the will of the WSC.

World Service Conference (WSC). A deliberative body composed of regional delegates and world-level trusted servants, the WSC provides an

effective voice and active conscience for the worldwide NA Fellowship.

World Service Conference Report. The full reports of the World Service Conference and the World Board and its committees.

World Service Office (WSO). World Service Board headquarters (Los Angeles) and branch facilities (Canada, Europe).

WSC. See *World Service Conference*.

WSO. See *World Service Office*.

OTHER NA PUBLICATIONS

Basic Text, *Narcotics Anonymous*

Originally published in 1983, this publication is commonly referred to as the Basic Text for recovery from addiction. The personal recovery stories of early NA members are also included to help new members find identification and hope for a better life.

It Works: How and Why

A complement to the Basic Text, each chapter examines the spiritual principles and practical importance of our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

The Narcotics Anonymous Step Working Guides

Provides a helpful background section discussing the principles relevant to each of our Twelve Steps, as well as some practical, “hands-on” questions for review regarding the individual’s understanding of each step.

Just for Today

Offers a wide variety of daily readings to addicts in recovery. Each entry opens with an NA quote, examines the day’s topic, and closes with a focusing thought or affirmation.

Sponsorship

Illustrated with members’ first-hand experiences, this book on sponsorship in NA celebrates the richness of differences and variety of experiences in the worldwide Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

The NA Way Magazine

The NA Way Magazine is the NA Fellowship’s international journal. It is published quarterly in various languages. The magazine contains feature articles about topics and events that are of interest to the general NA membership, recovery sharing, service experience, humor, opinions and editorials, and a coming events calendar. To be placed on the mailing list, contact the World Service Office.

Reaching Out

Reaching Out is a newsletter designed to meet the needs of institutionalized addicts as well as H&I subcommittees throughout the fellowship. If you are interested in being placed on the mailing list for this publication or would like to write us about your experience in recovery through Narcotics Anonymous program, the address is *Reaching Out*, c/o World Service Office, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.

Behind the Walls

This simple booklet is designed specifically for individuals who are incarcerated and who may have a drug problem. Its pages reflect the experience of recovery from addiction, both in and out of jails and prisons.

JUST FOR TODAY

Tell yourself:

JUST FOR TODAY my thoughts will be on my recovery, living and enjoying life without the use of drugs.

JUST FOR TODAY I will have faith in someone in NA who believes in me and wants to help me in my recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY I will have a program. I will try to follow it to the best of my ability.

JUST FOR TODAY through NA, I will try to get a better perspective on my life.

JUST FOR TODAY I will be unafraid. My thoughts will be on my new associations, people who are not using and who have found a new way of life. So long as I follow that way, I have nothing to fear.

Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.