

SAN DIEGO IMPERIAL REGION OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
REGIONAL SERVICE COMMITTEE

PUBLIC INFORMATION
SUBCOMMITTEE

PUBLIC INFORMATION

WHAT IS IT?

WHO DOES IT?

HOW DOES IT GET DONE?

IS IT...PROMOTION?

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous¹®

- 1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. 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 N.A. as a whole.**
- 5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.**
- 6. An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.**
- 7. Every N.A. 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. N.A., 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 N.A. 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.²**

¹ *Twelve Traditions reprinted for adaptation by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.*

² Narcotics Anonymous, Basic Text 6th Ed., C. 2008 Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Van Nuys, Ca.

Twelve Concepts of Narcotics Anonymous Service³

- 1. To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the NA groups have joined together to create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole.**
- 2. The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.**
- 3. The NA groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it.**
- 4. Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.**
- 5. For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.**
- 6. Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.**
- 7. All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.**
- 8. Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.**
- 9. All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.**
- 10. Any member of a service body can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.**
- 11. NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.**
- 12. In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous, our structure should always be one of service, never of government.⁴**

³ The Twelve Concepts for NA Service were modeled on AA's Twelve Concepts for World Service, published by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., and have evolved specific to the needs of Narcotics Anonymous

⁴ Narcotics Anonymous, Twelve Concepts of Narcotics Anonymous Service, Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc. © 1991 (approved Edition 1992) Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Van Nuys, Ca . . .

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PRESENTATION:

- To inform the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as to the nature of Public Information and its efforts so that **any** member with 90 or more days clean knows what to do when someone outside N.A. requests information.
- To stimulate interest and participation in P.I. service.
- To encourage feed-back and valuable input to help set priorities for the future direction of public information.

PREFACE:

COMMUNITY RELATIONS –PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE

It's a given in N.A. that, as recovering addicts, we have to share our recovery with others in order to stay clean. The same applies to our groups. **Without newcomers, the most important people in our meetings are absent. Narcotics Anonymous maintains its vitality by fulfilling its primary purpose; carrying the message to the addict who still suffers.**

What does that have to do with our public relations? Simple. **N.A. cannot help addicts if they never hear of us, or if our reputation is such that addicts are advised to steer clear of us.** True, N.A. will reach some addicts directly, good community relations or not. Our members will invite friends, family members, and coworkers who seek recovery to attend our meetings. Other addicts will hear of us at H&I (*Hospitals and Institutions*) presentations; if they need help, they'll know who to call.

The vast majority of still-suffering addicts, however, must be reached indirectly, through others in the community. Most addicts will only hear of us through media reports and announcements, through professional referral, or through direction given by members of the community-at-large—or they won't hear of us at all. To fulfill our primary purpose, we will need to seek good, cooperative relations with the community around us. We can't fulfill that purpose on our own.⁵

⁵ What is said here is a representation of what the Guide to Public Information [Narcotics Anonymous, Guide to Public Information, Narcotics Anonymous World Services, 1991, Van Nuys, Ca] and the Public Relations Handbook [Narcotics Anonymous, Public Relations Handbook, Narcotics Anonymous World Services, 2012, Van Nuys, Ca]

BASIC INFORMATION

WHAT IS IT? WHO DOES IT? HOW DOES IT GET DONE?

What Is It?

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

The purpose of a public information subcommittee is to inform the public that N.A. exists and offers recovery from the disease of addiction.

Who Does It?

Public information work is accomplished through service committees directly responsible to those they serve. These P.I. subcommittees provide community awareness of what N.A. is, as well as how, when, and where we are available.

How Does It Get Started?

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

P.I. AT VARIOUS LEVELS OF SERVICE WHAT EVERY MEMBER SHOULD KNOW

The Member, the Group and Public Information

Area and regional public information subcommittees should adequately inform the fellowship about P.I. efforts so that any member with 90 or more days clean knows what to do when someone outside N.A. requests information. Here's how an N.A. member should handle requests from outside the fellowship for speaking engagements, general information, literature, etc.:

- Call the area P.I. chair (or someone designated by the group if there is no area P.I. chair) to handle the request.
- The group secretary and group service representative (GSR) should always have on hand phone numbers for the area P.I. chair, area service committee (ASC) chair, and vice chair. All requests for information from outside the fellowship should be referred to those trusted servants.

Some very basic rules of thumb in P.I. need to be understood by every N.A. member:

- **Never do speaking engagements on your own!** Refer them to the appropriate trusted servant (see above).
- **Never do media interviews on your own!** Refer requests for interviews to the appropriate trusted servant (see above).
- **Remember that no individual member can ever represent N.A.** That's why we have service committees to handle public information.

Area Service Committee and Public Information

Very simply, an area service committee is responsible for establishing and supporting a well organized, informed P.I. subcommittee. The P.I. subcommittee, under guidance and direction of the ASC, should establish guidelines and develop a contingency plan to respond to all requests for information from individuals, agencies or media within the geographical boundaries of the ASC.

Once a request has been received or when plans are being drawn for a P.I. campaign, the following information must be obtained and appropriate action taken:

Will this action (a newspaper interview, a professional seminar, etc.) affect other areas or regions or N.A. as a whole?

No – Then proceed according to your area’s contingency plan.

Yes – Then STOP further action until all areas and/or regions involved have been contacted and a joint plan has been developed.

Regional Service Committee and Public Information

An RSC is responsible for establishing and supporting a well organized, informed P.I. subcommittee. The P.I. subcommittee, under the guidance and direction of the RSC, should establish guidelines and develop a contingency plan to respond to all requests for information from individuals, agencies or media within the geographical boundaries of the RSC.

In addition, the RSC P.I. subcommittee is responsible for coordinating area P.I. efforts and for cooperating with other regions in joint P.I. efforts. The RSC P.I. subcommittee is the communications link between the areas and the world. This means that the RSC P.I. subcommittee must provide all information and material developed at a world level to their areas. Regional P.I. learning days or workshops are a good way to improve communications among all levels of P.I. service.

Once a request has been received or when plans are being drawn for a P.I. campaign, the following information must be obtained an appropriate action taken:

Will this action (a newspaper interview, a professional seminar, etc.) affect other areas or regions or N.A. as a whole?

No – Then proceed according to your area’s contingency plan.

Yes – Then STOP further action until all areas and/or regions involved have been contacted and a joint plan has been developed.

Do’s and Don’ts for P.I. Service Work in General

These Do’s and Don’ts are important and should be studied carefully. In our past experience with public information work, we have found that by practicing the Do’s we can best carry the message of N.A. to the public. When the don’ts are not taken into consideration, our message of recovery may become lost or distorted.

Do

Have a working knowledge of the Twelve Traditions

Follow established guidelines.

Remember quality is more important than quantity. Start with one or two projects and do them well before branching out. Remember other Twelve Step fellowships are part of the public we are informing. Practice cooperation, not affiliation.

Present a good image of recovery (be on time, dress appropriately, and avoid the use of obscenities, etc.

consult with members experienced in P.I. work before contacting the media and/or public.

Use discretion when giving out personal phone numbers.

Don't

Don't endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside organization.

Don't do the work of another committee, such as H&I (Hospitals and Institutions)

Don't do it by yourself. Remember the First Tradition and that the service structure is there to be used.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

In response to many letters from the fellowship regarding the Traditions and P.I. service, Narcotics Anonymous World Service and World Board have supplied written answers to a variety of questions. *Some of these* are included below in a question/answer form.

The answers, formulated by trusted servants with years of service experience, are not meant to be the final authority, but have proven helpful to many members in gaining a better understanding of the relationship between P.I. and our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

Q. *What is the importance of anonymity?*

A. Our Eleventh and Twelfth Traditions talk about anonymity. Tradition Twelve states that "anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities." Tradition Eleven cautions us to maintain our anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.

When an individual member of the fellowship finds himself or herself in the limelight as a member of Narcotics Anonymous, the result is one individual speaking for Narcotics Anonymous. It also creates an artificial barrier between the particular member and other members of the fellowship. It taps into the grandiosity that is a part of our individual characters and sets the person up as an expert. Breaking anonymity at the level of press, radio and films is dangerous

to the individual's recovery and might be a deterrent to other individuals coming into the program. They may feel that we can't be trusted to maintain their anonymity or that they will be required to discuss their addiction and recovery on a public level.

The fellowship at all levels—area, regional and world—needs to be very careful in selecting individuals to do P.I. work. There are individuals who actively seek media exposure and these individuals are probably the least qualified to do P.I. work.

The individuals best qualified are those who value anonymity and are willing to serve out of love for the fellowship and not out of ego needs.

Q. We are writing to ask if it is all right for some of our members to take photographs during an N.A. meeting.

A. Photographs taken at an N.A. meeting, regardless of whether it is a regularly scheduled meeting of Narcotics Anonymous or a meeting held at an N.A. function or activity, can be a potential danger to individual members' anonymity.

Taking photographs at banquet dinners, dances and picnics seems to be a common practice throughout the fellowship. We believe this practice does not constitute a violation of our Traditions provided those individuals whose pictures are taken have no objection and that the photographs are for the enjoyment of the individuals involved and are not ever to be used at the level of press, radio, or films.

Q. Is it promotion or attraction when a P.I. subcommittee contacts schools, probation officers, county or government offices and treatment centers to let them know about N.A.?

A. Our Eleventh Tradition tells us that our public relations policy is one of attraction rather than promotion. When P.I. subcommittee members go out into the community and inform government agencies and individuals who work with addicts about who we are and what we do, they are operating well within the level of attraction. We provide information regarding our program and letting those agencies and individuals know we are a Twelve Step program of recovery from the disease of addiction.

Care needs to be exercised to avoid any promises or to make any commitments we cannot keep. When we begin to do this we have crossed the line into promotion.

Q. Are PSA ads on the radio attraction or promotion?

A. Whether PSA's on the radio and television are attraction or promotion depends directly on the content of the material presented in the advertisement. It seems to us that there is a fine line between attraction and promotion. Providing basic information and letting the public know who we are and what we do is another area of attraction. When we go beyond the act of letting the public know who we are and what we do, we get into the area of promotion.

Q. *Are PSA ads on the radio attraction or promotion? (cont'd)*

When we start making exaggerated promises beyond the scope of recovery from addiction, we have crossed the line into promotion.

Q. *Is it appropriate to convey the message that addiction is a disease in our P.I. effort?*

A. Addiction is a disease. Our literature states that addiction is a disease. Our Basic Text states, "We have a disease: progressive, incurable and fatal." We as a fellowship have had firsthand experience with thousands of addicts. Based on our firsthand experience we believe we have a chronic, progressive and fatal disease which, if untreated, will result in jails, institutions and death for us. We believe it is absolutely necessary to state these basic facts about addiction in our public information endeavors.

We are in a stage of public understanding of the disease of addiction now where Alcoholics Anonymous was with the disease of alcoholism in the late thirties. It was at that time widely held that alcoholism was a moral weakness caused by a lack of character in the alcoholic, or that it was a psychiatric disorder whose treatment consisted of instilling character in the individual by treating the underlying psychiatric disorder whereby the excessive drinking disappeared. Alcoholics Anonymous members were the first to suggest that alcoholism was a disease. As a result of the efforts of members of the A.A. fellowship, today there is universal acceptance of alcoholism as a disease and the stigma attached to alcoholism has substantially diminished.

There is still an enormous stigma attached to drug addiction and as long as addicts and those individuals working with addicts believe that drug addiction can and should be controlled by the addict, addicts will die trying to find ways and means to develop control. A by-product of public information subcommittee activities will be the educating of those working with addicts to the fact that addiction is a disease and the addict is powerless over it. We need to accept ourselves as persons who have a disease and we need to inform those who work with us and those who love us of that fact. We can best do this by talking about addiction as a disease in our P.I. efforts.

Q. *Why is it not advisable for an individual to do P.I. work separate from a P.I. subcommittee?*

A. Our First Tradition states that "our common welfare should come first," and that "personal recovery depends on N.A. unity." This Tradition teaches us that the "we" comes before the "I." Often, what may seem like a wonderful idea to an individual turns out to have disastrous results. Most of the very serious

anonymity breaks which have occurred over the past several years have resulted from individuals acting on their own, not as the result of public information subcommittee members carrying out projects discussed and decided upon by a public information subcommittee.

When we act on our own we tend to be grandiose, and often operate on self will. One of the reasons we found our way into Narcotics Anonymous is that we could not do it alone. With respect to public information the “I can’t, but we can” still applies. Sometimes when a P.I. committee does not accept our idea or project we want to rust out and do it anyway. We grow in our recovery when we can resist this urge.

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

If you have read all that is contained in this pamphlet, you already are involved! By gaining an understanding of the functions and activities of public information, the individual member is better prepared to help P.I. to respond to requests for information from the community. By understanding the Do’s and Don’ts we observe in P.I., members of the fellowship will help to assure that any information given to the public regarding the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous will be provided in a manner which is appropriate and which conveys a positive image of recovery. It assures that our community contacts adhere to the Twelve Traditions and ensure that our primary purpose is fulfilled: to make the message of recovery available to any addict who suffers and has the desire to stop using.

To participate as a member of your area public information committee:

- Contact your area or regional chairperson. Your group secretary and group service representative (GSR) should have these numbers on hand.
- Call the Regional Service Office (RSO). The phone number appears on regional and area meeting schedules.
- Attend a regional or area P.I. committee meeting. Meeting times and locations should be located on regional and area meeting schedules.

Is there a clean time requirement for Public Information service?

A member with one day clean can be a valuable member of a public information committee. However, because our Guidelines request that members serving on the Regional PI Sub-Committee have a working knowledge of the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, and 12 Concepts of NA Service we would expect that they have 6 months to a year clean (regionally) There are numerous important tasks which do not have minimum clean time requirements.

Despite our only requirement for membership: the *desire* to stop using, it is, however important that members who will be participating in public information have actually achieved a minimum of six months clean. This is of utmost importance in situations where a member will be in direct contact with the public. An important aspect of P.I. work is that we convey a positive image of recovery; that the program of Narcotics Anonymous *works*. This can be jeopardized if this work is being performed by someone who is impaired or showing outward signs of current drug use.

Certain positions of responsibility such as committee officers: chairs, vice-chairs, secretaries, treasurers, etc. will have minimum clean time requirements as indicated in regional and area guidelines.