



Wisconsin Region Helpline Handbook

WRSC-IT Training

WRSC-IT Subcommittee

Introduction

NA's primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. One of the best ways we make ourselves available to those who need help is to provide a "Helpline" phone service where anybody can call and talk anonymously to a recovering addict. The phone number for the Helpline is listed as "Narcotics Anonymous" in the phone directory and serves that purpose. The still-suffering addict can call this number without fear of arrest, to receive information about NA meeting times and locations.

What is the Helpline?

The Helpline is our link to the addict on the streets. Many of the people you see in meetings today were first introduced to NA by calling us on the phone. You might say, then, that our most important function is to be at this end of the line when the addict needing help calls. There are, however, other very important functions for the Helpline:

1. A number where anybody who is not involved with NA can call and be directed to the proper source of information.
2. A number for people from in and out of town to call and inquire about meetings.

This is a service position of great responsibility! Please familiarize yourself with this material. The recovery and welfare of a suffering addict may depend on how well you are prepared to handle calls.

As a volunteer you will probably receive several different types of calls. This Helpline is concerned mostly with calls from addicts who need help. You will need to know what to do with other calls as well. When a person calls for information about NA, you could read them the following selections of this booklet.

A Brief Description of the Narcotics Anonymous Program

Narcotics Anonymous was founded in the early 1950's as a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women who suffered from drug addiction. Ours is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs, including alcohol. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. The program is based on a set of spiritual principles, written so simply that almost anyone can follow them in their daily lives.

NA groups meet on a regular basis to carry the message to addicts who still suffer. Group members are recovering addicts who help others to maintain their own recovery. This aspect of NA – one addict helping another – works when all else fails.

We are not affiliated with any other organizations. We are not connected with any political, religious or law enforcement groups. There are no dues or fees, and no promises to make to anybody. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, creed, sexual identity, religion, or lack of religion.

We are not interested in what or how much the addict has used or who their connections were, what they have done in the past or their social status. We are only interested in what they want to do about their drug problem and how we can help.

We feel that our approach to the disease of addiction is both realistic and practical. NA's experience has demonstrated that the addict need not necessarily be removed from community life for successful

recovery. Many of our members are achieving recovery while participating as responsible members of their community. All that is required for membership is a desire to stay clean.

Nine Misconceptions About NA

There are some misconceptions about what NA does and does not do, so here are some of the things that NA does not:

1. NA does not- operate detox units, recovery or halfway houses and is not affiliated with such facilities.
2. NA does not- crusade, solicit or try to persuade anyone to join.
3. NA does not- engage in or sponsor research.
4. NA does not- keep membership records or case histories, nor follow-up on members to control them in any way.
5. NA does not- make medical or psychological diagnosis or prognosis, nor provide marriage, family, or vocational counseling.
6. NA does not- provide welfare or other social services.
7. NA does not- conduct religious services of any kind.
8. NA does not- engage in education or propaganda about drugs.
9. NA does not- accept money for its services, is not funded by any public or private sources or agencies, nor accepts contributions from any non-NA sources.

Your Responsibility as a Wisconsin Region Helpline Volunteer

The Wisconsin Region Helpline uses an internet-based calling system to connect the addict seeking information to Helpline Volunteers. Helping members and potential members get to an N.A. meeting is our objective. Our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the suffering addict.

Remember you are likely to be the first contact the person has with NA. You are representing NA it is imperative to be professional using NA language.

Most calls will be simple requests from N.A. members about meeting times and locations. You may also receive calls from potential newcomers, relatives and friends of addicts, health care professionals, students, members of the media, etc.

In your role as a helpline volunteer, it is imperative to remember that you are not a crisis counselor, doctor, lawyer, or psychologist. The NA helpline is strictly for dispensing information about the NA fellowship and its meetings. Calls that are not within this scope should be quickly and politely diverted.

Attend scheduled Helpline Volunteer meetings. This is our only chance to share information with each other and receive updated material necessary for doing a good job.

Promptly notify Helpline Coordinator of any availability changes.

Direct any questions you may have to the Helpline Coordinator.

Give your shift to your Higher Power and all will be well.

Grounds for Immediate/Possible Dismissal from Helpline Service

Lack of fulfillment to Helpline requirements, ie: Change of fellowships, sponsor from other fellowship.

Using any form of verbal aggression on the phone

Use of excessive vulgarity

Flirting with a caller

Letting others answer calls during your shift without approval of Helpline Coordinator

Relapse

Use of calls for any personal gain

Any volunteer who has violated any of the terms outlined will be suspended from their responsibilities until the matter is reviewed by the WRSC-IT committee to determine if dismissal is warranted.

After one year of dismissal date, effected volunteer is welcome to petition the WRSC-IT Subcommittee to get back on volunteer list.

Instructions

Add the Wisconsin Region Helpline number to your contacts so you know a call is coming in. 1-800-240-0276

After answering a call, the automated service will ask if you wish to speak to the caller, press one to do so.

If you don't answer it will go to the next volunteer.

Any calls missed by all the scheduled volunteers a text is sent to the Phone line Coordinator.

Call backs are only done by the person receiving the text from missed calls.

The Helpline volunteers are scheduled in 2-hour minimum increments of time on days of their choosing. This schedule is done by the Phone Line Coordinator.

When an Addict Calls

Our Primary Objective is to Get Them to a Meeting

Your caller may have some knowledge of what NA is; they may just want to know where the meetings are. They may just want to know what NA is. Answer the questions from your own experience. For example, "All kinds of people go to NA" or "We help each other with recovery from addiction."

Be Compassionate

Listen to what the addict is saying, do not talk down at them. Allow the time they need to ask questions, or to discuss the problem they are having. Ask once again what you can do to help.

Let Them Know You Care

Acknowledge that you have heard what they have said, and that you are concerned. Respond empathetically and share some of your experience, strength, and hope.

Share about recovery in your life. Share that there is a life after drugs; things do get better. Do not be judgmental. Do not get hung up in war stories. After you have listened to the addict and told them that you know how they feel, discuss NA with them. NA is about one addict helping another. Let the caller know that this call is the first step to recovery if they want it.

“I’m Too Crazy, Too Messed Up”

Say, “I felt that way too.” You are trying to get the addict to agree to attend a meeting, where the magic happens. If after repeated tries the addict is still resistant, ask them to call back whenever they feel like attending a meeting. Conclude the call.

Final Word

Some of your callers will be very loaded and some may even be belligerent. Try to keep in your mind that you are planting a seed. Don’t argue; don’t call them names or lecture. You’ll want this to be a positive experience because it’s probably their first experience with Narcotics Anonymous. Even if they don’t get clean today, it may be this conversation that eventually gets them to our doors.

Extended Calls

Refrain from tying up the Helpline. If you wish to give the caller more time, call them back use *67 to protect your number from caller ID

Types of Calls

Medical Emergency

If the call is a medical emergency direct the caller to dial 911.

Suicidal

If the caller is suicidal, quickly refer the call to a suicide hotline number 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)

Friends and Family

Often want someone to talk to an addict or to call an addict. We cannot do this. The addict must call the Helpline to speak with an addict. Many family members find the support they need in groups designed to help the families and loved ones of addicts (such as [Nar-Anon](#) and [Families Anonymous](#)). Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with these organizations, nor do we recommend one program over another. We simply provide this information in a spirit of cooperation.

(We term these “non-endorsed-referrals”). Please incorporate this disclaimer into your conversation. Direct the caller to 211 for anything other than NA information.

Non-Recovery Related Inquiries

Sometimes people call asking what this or that drug is like, what it does or how long it stays in their system. Tell the caller that N.A. is concerned with recovery and that you're not qualified to give information about drugs. Direct the caller to 211 for anything other than NA information.

Healthcare Professionals, Students, Members of the Media, Community

Calls from healthcare professionals, students, and members of the media or community are usually requests for general information about N.A. or requests for our participation at a function. Answer any questions to the best of your ability. Make sure to get name, address and phone number of people making requests for information or directories and email our Public Relations Chair. It is important that we work within our service structure and that ALL requests for speaker, interviews, etc. be passed on the appropriate subcommittee. Direct the caller to 211 for anything other than NA information.

Meetings, Events, Etc.

Most information can be found on the Wisconsin Region of Narcotics Anonymous website wisconsinna.org Become familiar with this resource it will provide the most current information. If you have any questions or wish a tour, contact webservants@wisconsinna.org Refer any reports of closed meetings to bmlt@wisconsinna.org

Non-English Meetings

For non-English meeting information provide www.virtual-na.org

Meetings Outside of Wisconsin Region

For anyone needing meeting information outside of the Wisconsin Region refer them to www.na.org

Frequently Asked Questions Helpline Volunteers Experience with Calls

I have been using (smoking pot) for three years and I am not sure if I am an addict. Can NA help?

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

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

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

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

Typically, a leader or chairperson will conduct the meeting. There is usually time for participation in which members share about their experience, strength, and hope with staying clean. You do not have to speak during the meeting if you do not want to. We encourage you to get there a little early so that you can speak with some of the members and pick up some literature before the meeting starts. Meetings are conducted the same either face-to-face or virtual determined by the format codes of the meeting.

How much does NA cost? Are you counselors?

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

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

Some areas have common needs meetings while others do not. This area does/does not have a nurses' NA meeting. We can tell you, however, that recovering addicts from all types of professions attend our meetings. Meetings listed in the Wisconsin Region are not that specific, please provide examples of format codes to caller.

I would like to go to an NA meeting, but I do not have a car. Can you help?

Yes, we can try. Narcotics Anonymous has virtual meetings which can be located on several websites, www.wisconsinna.org, www.virtual-na.org

I am suicidal and I do not want to live anymore. What should I do?

Direct caller to 911 to get immediate assistance. Attempt to get the phone number and address so you can contact 911 also to relay any information from the caller.

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

Because Narcotics Anonymous is a self-help program, addicts must have the desire to stop using. Once he is ready to stop using drugs, please have him call us so we can direct him to an NA meeting in his area. In the meantime, you may want to call Nar-Anon or Families Anonymous. Although we are not affiliated with these organizations, we are happy to provide their telephone numbers. Call 211 for outside organizations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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