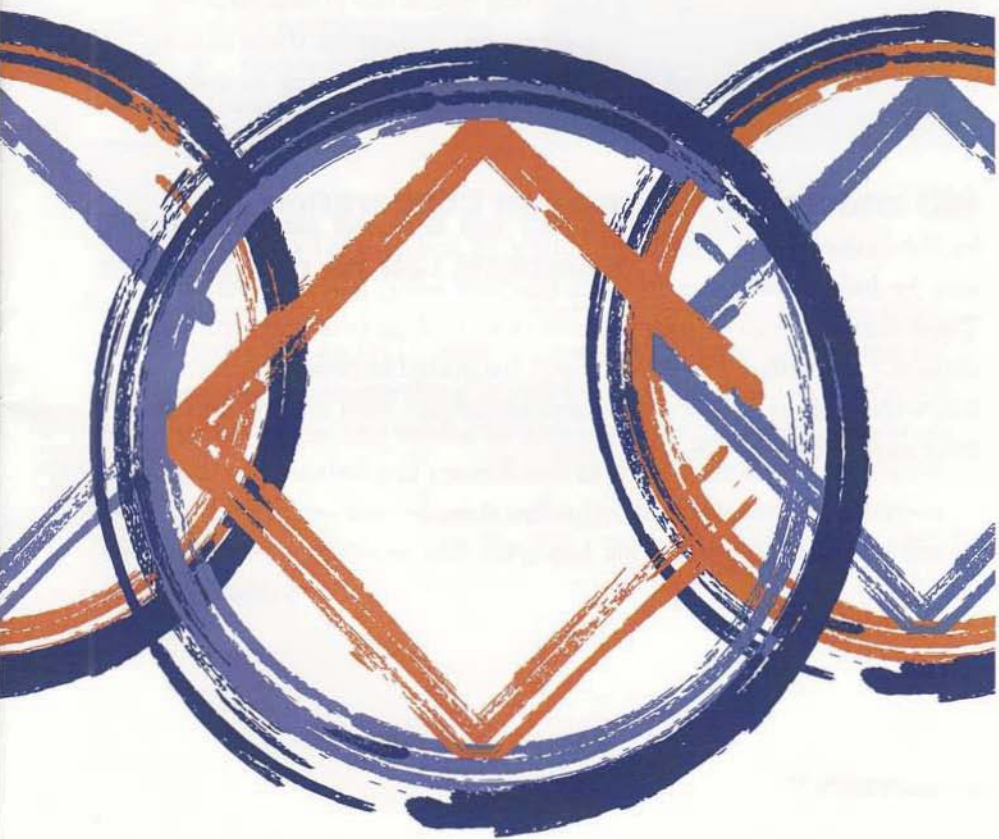


Hospitals & Institutions Basics

H&I





Why H&I Meetings Are Needed

H&I meetings can carry the NA message of recovery to addicts who do not have full access to regular Narcotics Anonymous meetings. H&I is an important service in our public relations efforts in NA. One of our PR goals is to inform the public and the potential member about our program. When addicts seeking recovery know who we are and where to find our meetings, this means our efforts have been successful. H&I meetings and presentations, except for those in long-term facilities, are intended to introduce those attending to some of the basics of the NA program.

H&I and Public Information Cooperation

In NA communities that have both a PI and an H&I committee, it may be helpful for them to work together when planning activities. These activities can include presentations to drug courts or treatment centers. Generally, PI or PR activities are geared to people outside our fellowship, often people who come in contact with addicts and can help addicts to find NA.

Although H&I usually has the responsibility to provide panel meetings, trusted servants from both committees may be involved with presentations in facilities that house potential members. Working together is an example of communication and sharing resources in action. In emerging and developing NA communities, a group or one service committee may provide services.

Meeting/Presentation Format

The format of any particular H&I meeting or presentation may vary depending on the type of facility. In short-term facilities the format will be more focused on the message that panel members are carrying in to the potential members, while at a long-term facility we may want to encourage more participation.

Whatever format is chosen, we usually get the audience involved with a question-and-answer session at some point during the meeting/presentation.



Who Is Best Suited for Carrying the NA Message in an H&I Meeting?

In our experience, it is best for members to have three months clean before attending an H&I committee meeting as an observer, and six months clean before speaking at an H&I meeting. It is not necessary for us to have been in a similar facility ourselves; any member who is willing to be oriented and trained and to share a clear and consistent Narcotics Anonymous message is well suited for H&I work. Preparation and orientation practices will vary, and are often developed by the local committee.

H&I Meetings/Presentations Where No ASC or H&I Subcommittee Exists

As Narcotics Anonymous grows in a community, meetings and groups in the area may want to carry the message of recovery. In isolated or developing NA communities, often due to a meeting's geographical location, or due the limited development of an NA service system, formation of and participation in an ASC with an H&I subcommittee is not yet possible or practical.

Once an H&I meeting/presentation is started, the news can spread very quickly. Facilities hear about our H&I efforts and seek out local members, often requesting an H&I meeting or information about NA meetings. Usually, these original members in an area are very committed and try to say "yes" to all requests, so new H&I meetings are started. At this point, it may be helpful to inventory both the human and financial resources available in order to prioritize meetings and/or facilities that can be served effectively. H&I needs committed members, but literature and transportation costs should also be considered.



It is common for H&I commitments to be taken on by a few dedicated members. We have discovered that often the demands of supporting one or more H&I meetings, week in and week out, can lead to

burnout. Effective delegation and planning can help assure that the commitments are maintained and the responsibilities

are shared. It is possible to do H&I work with a just a few members, but in such circumstances be sure to use common sense. Here are some tips:

- ♦ Never take on an H&I commitment alone. In the absence of an area H&I subcommittee, any H&I work has to be the effort of one or more groups. Remember, I can't—we can.
- ♦ Make sure the group is ready for the responsibility. Don't be afraid to say, "We're sorry, but we're just not able to support a meeting in your facility at this time." You may also consider negotiating. For example, you could offer to bring in one meeting a month instead of two. Don't take on additional commitments until you are ready.
- ♦ Get other groups involved whenever possible, perhaps alternating weeks or months. Reach out. Sometimes members from neighboring areas or the region are able to come and help on an occasional basis.
- ♦ Use these guidelines. You will find much material in here that will be helpful in your efforts.
- ♦ If you find that you have overcommitted yourselves and cannot consistently hold the meeting, go to the facility and let them know that you need to discontinue the meeting or decrease the schedule of meetings. NA will retain its credibility and respectability when you meet face-to-face to inform a facility's staff that you are unable to keep a commitment.
- ♦ Always be aware that H&I work is best done by area H&I subcommittees using the panel system. As soon as it is possible to form an ASC (area service committee) or to join one, do so.

“Dos & Don’ts”

“DOS”

Make directories of outside meetings and NA helpline numbers available to potential members so they can find NA upon release.

Start and end on time!

Clearly state that Narcotics Anonymous is separate from the facility and from other fellowships.

Obey the dress code and exercise common sense.

Conduct orientation and/or training sessions for all members involved in H&I service.

Meet with facility staff on a regular basis to check on how NA is doing in the facility and to hear how we could improve.

Ensure that a clear NA message of recovery is carried by all panel members.

Clarify the rules to whomever you bring into the facility, or have them attend an orientation if the facility offers one.

Emphasize that NA recovery is available to all addicts regardless of drug(s) used.

Involve potential members in the meeting, especially in long-term facilities (NA meeting readings, etc).

Screen all panel members, speakers, and chairpersons.

Attempt to get all agreements with the facility in writing.

Adhere to the security regulations at all times.

“DON’TS”

Conduct an H&I meeting or presentation alone.

Give any inmate or client within the facility your address or telephone number.

Break another person’s anonymity.

Get involved in discussions on outside issues; don’t forget why we are there.

Discuss facility staff members with inmates.

Show favoritism to any resident(s).

Bring an NA member who has friends and/or family in the facility.

Accept money or gifts from, or give money or gifts to, any inmate.

Emphasize using days while sharing an NA message of recovery.

Use excessive profanity.

Debate any issues involving facility rules, regulations, programs, or other fellowships.

Discuss conditions within the facility.

Wear flashy jewelry, and don’t carry excessive cash.

Take messages or carry letters in or out of the facility.

Ask what type of crime an inmate has been convicted of, or discuss guilt or innocence.

Additional Resources

For more detailed information, refer to the *Public Relations Handbook*, Chapter Six and its resources, and the *Hospitals & Institutions Handbook*. More information may also be obtained from neighboring H&I committees. NA World Services may be able to help find contacts close to you with H&I experience. Sharing our experience, strength, and hope in this area of service can greatly enhance the ties that bind us together.

We recognize that legal restrictions in many countries prohibit the congregation of addicts. If you live in an area where these restrictions exist, please contact NA World Services for additional information before moving forward with H&I efforts.

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