

HELPLINE POLICY

REQUIREMENTS TO BE A VOLUNTEER:

1. Six months continuous clean time.
2. Recovery through the 12 Steps and the 12 Traditions of N.A. and regularly attend N.A. meetings
3. A cell phone or home phone to have the Helpline forwarded to.

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.

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.

POTENTIAL NEWCOMERS may ask questions that can be concisely answered by referring to excerpts from the White Book, such as Who Is An Addict? What Is The Narcotics Anonymous Program? How It Works?, etc. If the caller needs to talk at length and/or requests a ride to a meeting, get the caller's name and phone number. If you know someone in their area of the same sex, call them for help. **NEVER give out the name, address or phone number of a 12 Step volunteer or N.A. member.** When returning a call, **ALWAYS be sure you are speaking to the person who called before identifying yourself as an N.A. member.** No NOT leave messages on a callers answering machine.

In your role as a helpline volunteer, it is imperative to remember that you are not a crisis counselor, doctor, lawyer or psychologist. The N.A. helpline is strictly for dispensing information about the N.A. fellowship, meetings and recovery. Calls that are not within this scope should be quickly and politely diverted. **IF THE CALL IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY, TELL THE CALLER TO DIAL 911. IF THE CALLER IS SUICIDAL, QUICKLY REFER THE CALLER TO A SUICIDE HELPLINE NUMBER: (800) SUICIDE.**

FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS 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. You may offer phone numbers of groups such as Families Anonymous after explaining that Narcotics Anonymous does not endorse or recommend any other organizations and is in no way affiliated with them, but simply offers alternative numbers for those callers

who need services other than N.A. (We term these “non-endorsed referrals”). Please incorporate this disclaimer into your conversation.

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 are not qualified to give information about drugs.

Calls for 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 call Rusty. It is important that we work within our service structure and that **ALL requests for speaker, interviews, etc. be passed on the appropriate subcommittee by Rusty**. Try to get addicts to get a directory at a meeting or off the website.

Scheduling is flexible and you will be assigned a date and time for your shift. I.e.: Tuesday morning or third Wednesday night. Experience has shown that a somewhat regular commitment (i.e.: second Monday of every month, etc.) and working a full shift works best. Volunteer shifts are:

8:00am – 6:00pm – Monday through Friday (days)

6:00pm – 8:00am – Sunday through Thursday (evenings)

9:00am – 6:00pm – Saturday & Sunday (days)

6:00pm - 9:00am – Friday & Saturday (evenings)

YOUR COMMITMENT TO THE HELPLINE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE BACK WHAT HAS BEEN SO FREELY GIVEN TO YOU. WHEN YOU ARE SCHEDULED TO ANSWER THE HELPLINE, BE THERE! IF SOMETHING UNAVOIDABLE DOES PREVENT YOU FROM FULFILLING YOUR COMMITMENT, PLEASE CALL THE PHONELINE CHAIR WITH AS MUCH ADVANCE NOTICE AS POSSIBLE. IT IS CRITICAL THAT WHEN ANY ADDICT CALLS FOR HELP, THE CALL NOT GO UNSWERED!!!!

A Quick Overview:

- DO carry the message to the addict that still suffers.
- DO answer the phone “Helpline, this is __, or how may I help you?”
- DO be certain when returning a call that the person requesting help is on the line before identifying yourself as an addict or mentioning N.A.

- DON'T return a call from a number on your caller ID. It is best that you answer all "Call Waiting" calls, even if the person you are talking to is upset. Every call is important.
- DON'T leave voice messages.
- Do make appropriate non-endorsed referrals from the referral list.
- DO contact the Helpline Chairperson if you have any problems.
- DO leave an appropriate message on your machine if you must leave, telling the caller they have reached the helpline and when someone will be able to answer their call. Please, only do this in an emergency.
- DON'T try to persuade the caller to stop using.
- DON'T spend too much time with people who are not addicts or addicts that are high.
- DON'T try and handle calls you are not qualified to handle.
- DON'T have a person of a different sex make a 12 Step call.
- DO offer the Families Anon. # to family members.
- DO get yourself a map, or street guide to familiarize yourself with the Chigagoland area.