



# A Guide to Phoneline Service

**A Guide to  
Phoneline Service**  
Revised, 1993

*We are dedicated to the proposition  
that no addict seeking recovery  
need die without having a chance  
to find a better way of life.*

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# I

## **GETTING STARTED**

*DO WE NEED A PHONELINE?*

*CAN WE SUPPORT A PHONELINE?*

*WHAT DO WE NEED TO START A  
PHONELINE SUBCOMMITTEE?*

*INFORMATION CHECKLIST*

*OPTIONS FOR PHONELINE SERVICES*

## C. What Do We Need to Start a Phonenumber Subcommittee?

The first thing to do is locate and enlist the support of members who have the desire, ability, and qualifications to carry out the responsibilities of operating and maintaining the phonenumber.

1. Members of the phonenumber subcommittee include:
  - a) A chairperson, elected by area or region
  - b) A vice chairperson and secretary, elected by subcommittee
  - c) A representative from each group or area
  - d) Any interested NA members

There may not be enough members to establish a separate phonenumber subcommittee. In this case, the responsibility may fall under the direction of the PI subcommittee.

## D. Information Checklist

The following is an information checklist for the beginning work of a phonenumber subcommittee.

1. Define the subcommittee's responsibilities.
2. Select the type of phonenumber service best suited to your area or region.
3. Determine the costs to be incurred for instituting and maintaining the phonenumber service selected.
4. It is important that the area or region "owns" the number utilized for phonenumber services. Although this may require an additional cost, it will insure that your area or region retains the same phone number for the duration of the phonenumber's operation.
5. Request sample phonenumber guidelines from nearby areas and regions, and from the World Service Office. Prepare your own phonenumber guidelines to meet the specific needs of your subcommittee.
6. Hold regular volunteer orientations and phonenumber learning days.
7. Prepare a Phonenumber Log that can be used to account for all calls received during each shift (refer to Addendum D).

## E. Options for Phonenumber Services

### Types of Phonelines:

**Hotline**—A phonenumber answered directly by a recovering addict.

**Helpline**—A phonenumber in which the caller is not always in immediate contact with an NA volunteer (i.e., calls are answered by an answering service, machine, voice mail, or the like, for all or part of the day).

# **II**

## **GENERAL VOLUNTEER INFORMATION**

*PHONELINE VOLUNTEERS*

*ATTRACTING AND KEEPING  
PHONELINE VOLUNTEERS*

*SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS*

*TWELFTH-STEP VOLUNTEERS*

*DO'S AND DON'TS FOR PHONELINE  
AND TWELFTH-STEP VOLUNTEERS*

A phonenumber volunteer will need to use good judgment regarding these calls. Never give out the name, address, or telephone number of any member of the NA Fellowship. Do not use last names, places of employment, etc.

*NOTE: The phonenumber volunteer must be told if the Twelfth-Step volunteer is unable to return the call immediately. The addict seeking help is expecting a return call. The phonenumber volunteer must then call someone else to follow up on the call. If an area or region is using phonenumber and Twelfth-Step volunteers interchangeably, the phonenumber volunteer may be the person responsible for talking at length with the caller.*

Calls from NA members are usually simple requests for meeting information. These should be answered quickly. Most members readily understand the need to keep the phonenumber open for other calls.

Calls from non-NA members, such as students, professionals, or community members, are usually requests for general information about NA. These also should be handled quickly. The caller can be advised that an informational packet is available. Then, the volunteer takes the name and address of the caller and refers this information to the appropriate committee (refer to Addendum C). Interested non-addicts can also be referred to open meetings.

If you are a volunteer, give callers requesting presentations, special meetings, literature, activities, etc., a brief description of NA, explaining that these requests will be referred to the NA member designated to handle such calls. Never make these types of commitments on your own. The phonenumber volunteer takes the name, number, etc. of the caller, completes the Referral Form (refer to Addendum C) and passes it along accordingly.

## **B. Attracting and Keeping Phonenumber Volunteers**

### **Attracting Phonenumber Volunteers**

There are many ways to attract members to become phonenumber volunteers. They include volunteer sign-up sheets, flyers asking for volunteers, being host to learning days aimed at attracting new volunteers, volunteer celebrations, and asking qualified members one-on-one to volunteer.

Subcommittees use Phonenumber Volunteer Sign-up Sheets (refer to Addenda G & H) to attract volunteers. Good results can be obtained by including a pen along with the form to encourage immediate action. Specific information may be requested (e.g., name, telephone number, address, clean-time, days and time available, etc.) as deemed necessary by your subcommittee. It is necessary to develop a procedure to insure the timely collection and use of all completed sign-up sheets. To achieve the best results, a subcommittee member should contact the volunteer. During such contact, the volunteer should be informed of a scheduled orientation session. Refer to Addendum H or the World Service Office for additional examples.

Some examples are as follows:

**Phonline/Twelfth-Step volunteer list coordinator**—Distributes, collects, and organizes the volunteer lists. This person is the initial contact for the volunteer providing services to the subcommittee.

**Phonline flyer coordinator**—Produces and distributes phonline flyers to the groups and areas.

**Orientation coordinator**—Schedules group or individual orientation sessions for new volunteers.

**Orientation presenter**—Conducts orientation of phonline and Twelfth-Step volunteers and sometimes to the professional answering service operators.

**Orientation package coordinator**—Copies and assembles orientation packages used in orientation sessions.

**Communications coordinator**—Responsible for the monthly mailings to the volunteers.

**Celebration coordinator**—Organizes volunteer celebration functions for attendance by past, present, and future volunteers (2–3 times per year).

**Poster distribution liaison**—Acts as liaison between public information and phonline subcommittees in the acquisition of volunteers to distribute NA phonline posters.

**Meeting list liaison**—Acts as liaison between phonline, public information, and literature subcommittees in the coordination of the local meeting list, its production, and its distribution.

**Answering service liaison**—Acts as liaison between phonline subcommittee and the professional answering service. Also responsible for keeping their information packages up-to-date.

**Special abilities coordinator**—Non-English, American Sign Language, etc.

*NOTE: These tasks may take more than one individual's attention.*

## C. Special Considerations for Volunteers

An important point needs to be made. Not all volunteers can or want to attend subcommittee meetings. However, this should not exclude them from being of service within the subcommittee.

During the subcommittee meetings, it is important to keep in mind that each person's ideas are worthy of attention. Consider the merits and allow active participation of all those present.

Service work is often a thankless job. It is essential to remember that these are volunteer positions. Recognition of the accomplishments by our volunteers validates their feelings of worthiness and their efforts to contribute toward the subcommittee's common goal. We need to ensure that we take the time to recognize and thank our volunteers personally and individually.

5. Ensure that all arrangements for meeting the caller are accurate and understood by both parties.
6. Upon arranging to meet the caller, it is suggested that the volunteer bring a current meeting list, some NA pamphlets, and a *White Booklet*.
7. Tell someone where you are going, and call them when you get there.
8. Don't stop anywhere on the way to a meeting, especially at the suggestion of the newcomer.
9. The NA program has one must that applies to everyone: no drugs or paraphernalia in our possession. It is important that the volunteer tries to ensure that the newcomer follows this requirement. This is for the protection of the volunteer, the fellowship, and its groups.
10. Once an addict has been taken to a meeting, the Twelfth-Step volunteer may help the addict obtain telephone numbers and transportation to other meetings.

*NOTE: If the addict requires medical attention, refer to the section on Handling Crisis Calls.*

If the addict begins recovery in a hospital or a treatment center, Twelfth-Step volunteers can call regularly to let the addict know that members of NA care. When the Twelfth-Step volunteer visits, it is a good idea to bring along some NA literature to leave for the addict, such as *An Introductory Guide To Narcotics Anonymous*.



# **TRAINING AND ORIENTATIONS**

***VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION FOR PHONELINE  
& TWELFTH-STEP VOLUNTEERS***

***ORIENTATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL  
ANSWERING SERVICE PERSONNEL***

***LEARNING DAYS***

## Volunteer Orientation Package

***A Guide to Phoneline Service***—This can be excerpts from NA conference-approved literature or a package created by your local subcommittee.

***White Booklet***—This is a helpful resource guide when answering certain questions and explaining what NA is to a caller.

***Meeting lists***—Most of the calls received will be requests for meeting locations and times.

***Phoneline volunteer lists***—This is a listing of the members currently involved in phoneline service.

***Twelfth-Step volunteer lists***—This is a listing of all the members currently involved in Twelfth-Step service.

***Current volunteer schedule***—This is beneficial for the volunteer to have in case of schedule changes, and to effectively pass along the necessary information to the next volunteer (refer to Addendum F).

***Phoneline log sheets***—These are to be completed by all phoneline volunteers so that we may evaluate the services we provide (refer to Addendum D).

***Local Newsletter/Activities sheet***—This will keep the volunteer up-to-date with meeting changes, upcoming subcommittee meetings, and activities.

***Twelfth-Step Referral Form***—Complete this form when referring the caller to a Twelfth-Step volunteer (refer to Addendum I).

***Referral Form***—Complete this form when referring information/requests to the appropriate NA member (refer to Addendum C).

## B. Orientation of the Professional Answering Service Personnel

Some phonelines currently in existence employ the assistance of a professional answering service. The particular format of the phonelines and the specific professional answering services contracted will vary from area to area. Just as we have seen the necessity to train our phoneline and Twelfth-Step volunteers, it is equally critical that we provide orientation for the professional answering service personnel.

Ideally, we would like to train the professional answering service operators in person. However, experience has shown that this is not always possible. Therefore, your subcommittee must develop an instructional package that *clearly* defines the procedures, policies, and guidelines for your phoneline operations. This package also contains special language to be used by the operator, meeting list, activity list, a statement regarding anonymity, and a list/schedule of volunteers to be contacted. Most importantly, *keep it simple*. When we provide long, drawn out explanations and guidelines, they are often ignored. If an orientation can be scheduled, the same orientation package may be used for the presentation.

Consistent communication between the professional answering service and the subcommittee will help insure the adherence to the procedures and practices of your subcommittee's phoneline operations.

***When should we hold our learning days?***—It is very important to plan the event well in advance to allow ample time for committee work assignments, site selection, program development, speaker selection, printing of materials, and announcement of the event. It is suggested that at least six months be allowed for a multiregional learning day. For a regional learning day, three to six months is sufficient. For an area event, one to two months is appropriate.

Selecting the date the learning days will take place can be a make or break factor in the success of your event. It is important that the event does not conflict with other major NA events, such as your regional convention. Nonholiday weekends are considered a good choice.

***Where should we hold our learning days?***—Possible sites include hotels, college campuses, community centers, campgrounds, or any place that has sufficient meeting rooms and can accommodate your needs. Your committee will need to determine specific criteria including the number and size of meeting rooms, a registration area, facilities for preparing and serving refreshments, nearby lodging and restaurants, and space for an entertainment function, if one is to be included in your program.

***Who should we invite?***—Absolutely everyone! As with all successful events, the more members in attendance, the more enriching the experience will be for all. As soon as you have decided on dates for the event, the WSO PI coordinator should be notified so that your event can be announced in all of the fellowship's publications. At this time, the WSC PI Committee should also be notified. The WSC PI Chairperson or your regional chairperson should be able to provide you with address lists for trusted servants in the surrounding areas so that they may also be invited. It is suggested that preregistration flyers be mailed at intervals to surrounding areas and regions right up to the date of the event.

***How much structure is required and under what circumstances?***—When discussing the theme and program, the size and duration of the event will most likely become the deciding factors. For a multiregional learning day, it is suggested that the event be held over a weekend. Multiregional learning days can be broad-based in focus and include meetings on several topics. The possibilities for a weekend-long event are virtually unlimited. Meetings can be held simultaneously in order to give those in attendance a choice of which topic they are most interested in, or you may choose to have one meeting at a time so that those in attendance can attend all of the discussions. Most weekend-long events include a recovery meeting along with some sort of entertainment.

For regional or area learning days, a day-long event is suitable. In addition, it is wise to narrow the focus of the event to two or three topical issues in phonerlines. Consecutive meetings are the preferred format for a day-long event.

Many variations exist for the formats of the individual meetings. The style you choose for the meetings will depend on the availability of speakers, the issues that are of current interest in phonerlines, and of course, the size of your event. You may choose to have mock presentations for answering services, skits, sharing sessions, mock phone calls, presentations, speaking rehearsals, or anything else your commit-

# **IV**

## **COMMON PHONELINE CALLS**

***FELLOWSHIP MATTER/REQUEST FOR INFORMATION***

***TALKING TO A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER***

***TALKING TO AN ADDICT***

***THE TWELFTH-STEP PROCESS***

***HOW TO HANDLE SPECIAL CALLS***

List (refer to Addendum B). Make sure the person writes the number down, then say, *"When the crisis passes, give our telephone number to your loved one and suggest he/she call NA to hear about recovery from drug addiction."*

### **Does The Addict Want Help?**

Find out if the addict wants to stop using. If the answer is yes and he/she would like to hear about recovery from drug addiction, talk to them (see the "Talking to an Addict" section).

If the addict doesn't want to stop using or come to the telephone, tell the caller, *"We cannot do anything for your loved one until they want to stop using—the addict must want help. There are however, programs for loved ones of addicts. I can tell you how to contact one if you would like."* NOTE:—Always explain briefly the principle of our Sixth Tradition. *"Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with, nor recommends any other organization, institution, emergency service, agency, or program. We simply provide alternate telephone numbers to callers who need services other than NA."* Answer questions about NA politely, but don't tie up the telephone for long, *"We need to clear the line now in case an addict is trying to call us. Feel free to attend an open meeting if you would like to find out more about NA. Your loved one may wish to attend with you."*

NOTE: For additional information, refer to the "How to Handle Special Calls" section.

## **D. Talking to an Addict**

Listen and respond to the caller. A suffering addict probably will indicate that he/she wants information or wants help.

### **Addict Wants Information About NA**

Answer the caller's questions. If you sense that the caller wants more, ask, *"Do you have any more questions about Narcotics Anonymous?"* After the caller has asked all of his/her questions, and if you sense that the caller wants to continue the conversation, then respond, *"It sounds like you are really hurting. I know the desperation that you must be feeling. Do you want help to quit using drugs?"* The addict will indicate if he/she wants help.

### **Addict Interested—May Be Ready For Help: NO**

Conclude the call by saying, *"When you are ready, we are here to help you. Our program works for those who want to quit using. Always remember that there is a way out."*

### **Addict Interested—May Be Ready For Help: YES**

If the caller wants help that is beyond the scope of services that NA can provide (e.g., detox, treatment information, etc.), furnish one or more telephone numbers from the Community Service Referral List (refer to Addendum B). Be familiar with the "How to Handle Special Calls" section. Do not hang up until you are fairly sure you have done all you can for this caller. If it is not a crisis call, listen to the caller and express your concern.

If the caller says they are **too hopeless**, *"It won't work for me. I'm too far gone,"* respond, *"I felt that way too, however, with the help of NA, I have a choice. I don't have to use today."*

If the caller has **other excuses**, *"I can't go because: I have family or work obligations; my wife/husband doesn't approve; etc."* respond, *"It sounds like if you don't get help you may not be able to keep your job, family, etc."*

After discussing the caller's reasons for not going to a meeting and some possible solutions, ask the caller, *"Do you want to go to a meeting or would you like to talk at length with someone else about NA?"* For a response refer to the appropriate heading within this section.

## **E. The Twelfth-Step Process**

The phoneline volunteer briefly tells the caller what the Twelfth-Step call is about, *"There are recovering addicts in the Fellowship of NA who will talk with you at length. I have to contact one of them who will then call you back."* Complete the Twelfth-Step Referral Form (refer to Addendum I). *"May I have your first name and telephone number, etc. Stay by your telephone and someone will call you back as soon as possible. You've done the right thing by calling us."* Call the appropriate Twelfth-Step volunteer, and give them the information as collected.

If you have called all the Twelfth-Step volunteers who are the same gender as the caller and have not found one available, call the addict back and respond, *"I am unable to reach anyone right now. Would you like to talk with me for awhile, or do you want someone to call you in a few hours to talk with you?"*

If the caller wants to keep talking, listen and express your concern. Conclude the call by stating, *"I'll keep trying to reach someone who can call you as soon as possible. Again, you did the right thing by calling us. If you need more help, call us back."* Keep trying to find a Twelfth-Step volunteer available to return the call to this person. If by the end of your shift you haven't found someone to return the call, give the information to the phoneline volunteer about to begin their shift. They in turn, will continue to attempt to find a Twelfth-Step volunteer available to return the call.

## **F. How to Handle Special Calls**

A Narcotics Anonymous phoneline is strictly for dispensing information about the NA Fellowship, NA meetings, and recovery. The volunteer must always remember that they are only a recovering addict sharing their experience, strength, and hope. As volunteers, we are not professional crisis counselors, doctors, or psychologists, etc., and do not have the right to give professional advice. Callers with issues that, in the volunteer's opinion, are beyond the boundaries of Narcotics Anonymous should be quickly and politely given an appropriate referral number from the Community Service Referral List (refer to Addendum B). Before providing any other referral number, always explain that Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with, nor recommends, any other organizations, institutions, emergency services, agencies, or programs. We simply provide alternate telephone numbers for those callers who need services other than NA. Provide phoneline volunteers with the Community Service Referral List (refer to Addendum B) for the special calls they may encounter.

# **V**

## **ADDENDA**

This section contains lists and forms that your subcommittee might find useful. Additional examples may also be acquired through the World Service Office. We encourage your subcommittee to develop the materials that specifically meet your needs.

***PHONELINE FLOW CHART***

***COMMUNITY SERVICE REFERRAL LIST***

***REFERRAL FORM***

***PHONELINE LOG***

***PHONELINE VOLUNTEER FLYER***

***PHONELINE VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE***

***PHONELINE VOLUNTEER SIGN-UP SHEET 1***

***PHONELINE VOLUNTEER SIGN-UP SHEET 2***

***TWELFTH-STEP REFERRAL FORM***

***VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION OUTLINES***

***NOTE: Please send a copy of any materials created to the World Service Office so that others may benefit from your subcommittee's experience.***

**ADDENDUM B**  
**COMMUNITY SERVICE REFERRAL LIST**

When providing these numbers, always explain that *Narcotics Anonymous* is not affiliated with nor does it recommend any other organizations, institutions, emergency services, agencies, or programs. We simply provide alternate telephone numbers for those callers who need services other than Narcotics Anonymous.

**DRUG CRISIS HOTLINE** \_\_\_\_\_

**SUICIDE PREVENTION CENTER** \_\_\_\_\_

**POISON CONTROL CENTER** \_\_\_\_\_

**MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCIES** \_\_\_\_\_

**RAPE CRISIS CENTER** \_\_\_\_\_

**SPOUSE ABUSE SERVICES** \_\_\_\_\_

**CHILD ABUSE** \_\_\_\_\_

**RUNAWAY HOTLINE** \_\_\_\_\_

**COUNTY/STATE-WIDE  
EMERGENCY NUMBER** \_\_\_\_\_

**FAMILY-ORIENTED  
RECOVERY PROGRAM** \_\_\_\_\_

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# ADDENDUM F PHONELINE VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

MONTH: \_\_\_\_\_

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## ADDENDUM I

# TWELFTH-STEP REFERRAL FORM

Listed below is additional information needed to refer a Twelfth-Step call. The phonenumber volunteer explains to the caller that all information is confidential, however additional information may be needed to help them.

A phonenumber volunteer will need to use good judgement regarding these calls. *Never* give out the name, address or telephone number of any member of the NA fellowship. *Do not* use last names, places of employment, etc.

Date of call: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of call: \_\_\_\_\_

First name of caller: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Street address, city: \_\_\_\_\_

Has the caller ever attended an NA meeting? \_\_\_\_\_

How did the caller hear about NA? \_\_\_\_\_

Has the caller used drugs today? \_\_\_\_\_

What does the caller want from NA? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Information about NA.

\_\_\_\_\_ Talk to someone at length about NA.

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (explain)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of phonenumber volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Twelfth-Step volunteer to which this call was referred: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The phonenumber volunteer also makes a note of any other pertinent information from the caller as soon as possible. After hanging up, the volunteer should refer to the Twelfth-Step list and call a Twelfth-Step Volunteer of the same gender and geographical area as the caller. The information gathered should be relayed directly to the Twelfth-Step volunteer as soon as possible.

## **Volunteer Orientation Package**

***A Guide to Phoneline Service***—This can be excerpts from NA conference-approved literature or a package created by your local subcommittee.

***White Booklet***—This is a helpful resource guide when answering certain questions and explaining what NA is to a caller.

***Meeting lists***—Most of the calls received will be requests for meeting locations and times.

***Phoneline volunteer lists***—This is a listing of the members currently involved in phoneline service.

***Twelfth-Step volunteer lists***—This is a listing of all the members currently involved in Twelfth-Step service.

***Current volunteer schedule***—This is beneficial for the volunteer to have in case of schedule changes, and to effectively pass along the necessary information to the next volunteer (refer to Addendum F).

***Phoneline Log sheets***—These are to be completed by all phoneline volunteers so that we may evaluate the services we provide (refer to Addendum D).

***Local newsletter/activities sheet***—This will keep the volunteer up-to-date with meeting changes, upcoming subcommittee meetings, and activities.

***Twelfth-Step Referral Form***—Complete this form when referring the caller to a Twelfth-Step volunteer (refer to Addendum I).

***Referral Form***—Complete this form when referring information/requests to the appropriate NA member (refer to Addendum C).

## **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.