



Suggested Behavior at Institutions, Jails and Prisons

These suggestions are taken from institution rules, state law, and the Narcotics Anonymous H&I Handbook. Each institution has its own guidelines which an NA H&I member must follow when doing service.

Dress appropriately:

- Clean, simple clothing.

Don't wear the following:

- No blue jeans or blue clothing of any sort.
- No see through clothing. No sweatsuits.
- No tank tops, sports bras, sleeveless t-shirts, or shorts.
- No shirts with logos (NA or anything else).
- No short skirts or low cut blouses/dresses.
- No yellow rain slickers or long umbrellas.
- Excessive, expensive or religious jewelry.

Be friendly, but not overly familiar:

Check with the institution regarding their rules about hugging and handshaking:

When introduced or saying goodbye, if the institution rules prohibit hugging, then shake hands only. You may create an unsafe situation by the close physical contact which occurs as a result of hugging.

Do not give out personal information such as:

- Last name
- Address
- Phone number
- Place of employment
- Children's names
- Family pictures
- Anything that can be used for identity theft

Ask permission:

Ask the NA coordinator for permission before doing anything for or giving anything to an inmate, resident, client or patient. They will tell you what is and is not within the rules. If you have any doubts, don't do it. Never give anything except NA literature that is distributed by H&I. We are only there to give the NA message of recovery. Don't offer rides or other assistance to anyone getting out. (Jobs/housing/money/loans, etc.)

Do not bring messages to inmates or carry messages out for inmates.

If an inmate wants to know how to find you when they get out it is all right to tell them what meeting they can go to in order to see you.

No other information is appropriate.

When you share your NA Recovery:

- Remember that we are there to help inmates learn a better way to live. They will model our behavior. Please make it attractive.
- Stay focused on a clear message of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous using appropriate NA language.
- Minimize profanity. (It is not necessary to swear to get anyone to identify with us)
- Avoid sexual history.
- Do not be drug specific.
- Short 'war stories' are acceptable.
- Addicts come to meetings to learn how to stay clean and to hear what you do on a daily basis to that end, not because they need to hear more about the insanity of the disease.

When in prisons or jails:

Please be courteous to and cooperate with the correctional officers and staff at all times. Follow their instructions immediately and without argument. (Your safety and/or your life may depend on it.)

Remember that you are in a prison or jail. These women and men are here for good reasons.

- Do not discuss their crimes.
- Do not express any opinions on: how they are treated, what the staff does or does not do, any CDC policies, state laws, prison rules, or any other outside issues.
- Do not allow yourself to be manipulated.
- Do not argue with the inmates.
- Do not be sarcastic or demeaning to the inmates.
- Do not tell off color or racial jokes.
- Do not feel sorry for these men.
- Do keep firm boundaries about your personal space and information.
- Be aware that over 80% of these men are repeat offenders with a different agenda than the one that you have. Their intentions may be good right now, but that can change quickly.
- Do remember that there may be predators at these meetings who are not interested in recovery, but how they can use you. The custody screening process does not prevent them from attending NA.

Please understand that, although this seems like a lot to remember, it is for your protection, the good of the fellowship, and to preserve our good relationship with the institution.

The Northern California H&I Sub-committee expresses thanks to the Marin County H&I Committee for permission to use these suggestions. (rev 2 August 2004)