

PHONELINES TRAINING SESSION

The content and order of this session may vary depending on the time available. We encourage service committees to consider any individual circumstances that would require changes. Times referenced for particular segments of the session may vary.

Goals of the session

- ▶ Discuss underlying public relations principles within our phonline efforts.
- ▶ Orient and train volunteers about how to respond to various types of phonline calls.
- ▶ Introduce NA members to local phonline technologies and policies.

On tables are pens, note sheets, phonelines flowchart, and any local phonline resources.

Before the session begins

Prior to the session

- ▶ Review Chapter Nine of the *Public Relations Handbook*.
- ▶ Prepare a sign-in sheet, asking for name and contact information, to be passed around the room during the session.

Once onsite

- ▶ Consider the setup of the room:
 - Are there any sight barriers, or hearing or lighting challenges to consider?
 - Are there any other distractions that might need to be addressed?
 - Do the size of the meeting and the seating plan allow for small group discussions?
- ▶ Set up a literature table for any additional phonline handouts or resource materials.
- ▶ Be sure to be fully prepared to start the session **on time**.

Leader provides the setup of the session 5 minutes

Begin the session covering the following points:

Introductions

- ▶ The leader can introduce all of the presenters. Give a brief background of each presenter and their experience with phonelines.

Logistical issues

- ▶ Ask members to turn off ringers on their cell phones.
- ▶ Explain where the bathrooms are, when breaks will occur, what refreshments are available, etc.
- ▶ Inquire as to any special needs of any of the participants.
- ▶ Ask members to sign in with their name and contact information, and collect this list for updated information.

Setup

- ▶ Offer a brief outline of the session and what to expect, and state that any unanswered questions will be addressed at the end of the session.

Leader introduces core phonenumber PR principles

10 — 15 minutes

Leader identifies core public relations principles. State the principles listed below. Choose one bullet point for each principle and offer an example or personal thought.

(Inform the participants that chapter two of the Public Relations Handbook has essays on the principles of the traditions along with examples.)

Cooperation

- ☞ One of our public relations goals is to build long-lasting relationships with other organizations.
- ☞ Compromising any of our traditions in an effort to build these relationships is never beneficial to individual members or NA as a whole. We maintain a consistent focus on our primary purpose with the public.
- ☞ By creating positive relationships with those outside of NA, and with our own members, we foster unity and harmony with each other and the community around us.
- ☞ We put the common welfare of NA first, and we remember that we are only autonomous as long as our actions do not affect NA as a whole.

Attraction

- ☞ What is likely to be attractive to the public and to professionals who interact with addicts is reliable communication, responsibility, commitment, and behavior that reflects recovery.
- ☞ We can demonstrate the reliability of NA by showing up and fulfilling our obligations, whether it is to return a telephone call for information about NA or to supply meeting directories at a public library.
- ☞ We can draw on the experiences of NA members to fulfill the commitments we make to professionals.

Leader poses questions for discussion by the group

5 — 10 minutes

The following questions for discussion by the group are intended to help members consider cooperation and attraction as they apply to our phonline efforts. The group discusses one of the questions in this setting. The remaining questions may be a tool for the phonline committee to discuss at one of their meetings.

- ☞ How is our phonline used to cooperate with various outside organizations (such as the phonline service provider, an organization we may use as a referral, other public organizations in the community, etc.)?
- ☞ What cooperative actions do we, as committees and groups, take to ensure a smoothly running phonline?
- ☞ Why is it important that volunteers be consistent and reliable with their service, and how does that help NA's message of recovery remain attractive?
- ☞ How do we make phonline service an attractive NA commitment?

Preparing volunteers

5 minutes

With the previous discussion as a foundation, leader covers the following points:

- ☞ Responsiveness is a key principle for phonline service. This means that trusted servants should engage with callers in a sensitive, appropriate, and helpful manner.
- ☞ Leadership qualities such as integrity, the ability to listen, and sound judgment are essential in providing phonline service.
- ☞ Phonline volunteers often have to perform in higher-pressure situations, and they are likely to be the first contact that people have with NA.
- ☞ Avoid using NA jargon (such as "it works when you work it," "home group," "get a sponsor," etc.).
- ☞ Use NA literature to present an accurate and positive message of recovery and to clarify that the NA program is separate from treatment centers or other twelve-step programs.
- ☞ Do not make commitments on behalf of the area, region, or NA Fellowship. If a professional or member of the public contacts an NA phonline, volunteers should provide as much information about NA as they can, solicit information from the public contact log, and follow up with the appropriate trusted servant such as a committee chairperson or the area's media contact person.

Training volunteers

15 minutes

Leader asks: "Who calls our phonelines?"

Responses should include:

- ☞ Addicts (both potential members and current NA members).
- ☞ Nonaddicts.
- ☞ Family members and loved ones.
- ☞ Professionals.
- ☞ Clergy.

Leader then asks participants to identify specific types of calls

- ☞ Requests for meeting information.
- ☞ Requests for general information about NA.
- ☞ Requests for public relations efforts (PI presentations, H&I meetings, etc.)
- ☞ Difficult calls from addicts who are:
 - ▶▶ under the influence of drugs.
 - ▶▶ prank calls.
 - ▶▶ calls from those who suffer from mental illness.

One strategy is to continually bring the conversation back to how the caller can get to an NA meeting and end a problem call before the situation escalates.

- ☞ Calls made by the public, including simple requests for information or calls made about problems created by the behavior of NA members.
- ☞ Crisis calls:
 - ▶▶ Volunteers should be very clear about where their responsibility ends. Phonenumber volunteers are not counselors or crisis workers.
 - ▶▶ Threats to commit suicide, a drug overdose, or talk about being a victim of violence are all examples of crisis calls.
 - ▶▶ Refusing to refer such callers to qualified outside crisis agencies could have legal implications, depending on local laws.
- ☞ Meeting recommendations:
 - ▶▶ Volunteers can respect callers' requests and recommend a meeting where they are likely to find addicts with whom they may identify. We do not, however, automatically assume that because someone is of a certain age, gender, ethnicity, or sexual identity, they will want a meeting recommendation.
 - ▶▶ If there are no common needs meetings in an area but there are meetings where, for example, a larger population of young people regularly attends, then phonenumber volunteers can suggest these meetings to a caller who is asking for a recommendation.
- ☞ Twelfth step calls:
 - ▶▶ A twelfth step call is usually a request for assistance to get to a meeting. We carry NA's message through twelfth step calls.
 - ▶▶ A twelfth step call can mean that two or more addicts provide a ride to an NA meeting or that volunteers simply talk with the caller, helping the potential member get to a meeting on their own.
 - ▶▶ When possible, members meet those requesting a ride to a meeting in a public place.

- ☞ Referrals:
 - ▶ We don't give referrals to one specific treatment center or detoxification unit. Instead, we can provide a list of any and all local treatment centers and not align or affiliate ourselves with one in particular, or we can inform members of generic treatment referral numbers, such as the National Treatment Referral Line in the United States.
 - ▶ If a caller has a local telephone directory, we can direct them to the services listed there. The same principle is true for suicide prevention numbers and other community service numbers.
 - ▶ Family members and loved ones of addicts frequently call our phonedines. Volunteers can provide numbers for Nar-Anon and Families Anonymous or other similar information. But remember that we don't recommend one program over another or offer our opinions about any of these programs.
- ☞ Review Phonedines Flowchart considering the above examples.
- ☞ Remind the participants that these points and additional points are contained in the "Phonedines" chapter of the *Public Relations Handbook*.

**Local
phonedine
process,
technology,
and other
issues**

10 minutes

Leader discusses the details of the local phonedine system

This portion of the session will be developed by the local committee; the information presented will depend on the type of system used and local policy and procedure.

- ☞ Review local requirements (cleantime, meeting attendance, etc.).
 - ▶ Consider any forms or logs that the committee requires the volunteers to complete.
- ☞ Review current phonedine opportunities.
- ☞ Discuss the telephone system used by phonedine volunteers.

Break: 15 minutes

**Role-
playing
exercise**

**15 — 20
minutes**

Leader facilitates an exercise designed to help volunteers get practical experience. Add some of the specific calls material to this session. This will help participants to be more involved in the training.

Role-playing – Phonedine volunteers

- ☞ Set up mock telephone calls using two chairs, positioned back-to-back. Simulate common phone calls (from the list above) received by the volunteers.
 - ▶ Ask volunteers to respond to various types of calls using this process.

- ▶▶ After each scenario, allow members to offer their thoughts on how the participants responded.
- ▶▶ Using the phonenumber resources, offer your own thoughts on how the call should be handled.
- ▶▶ Once time has expired, ask participants what some of their real challenges have been. Talk about real issues and how to handle them, and then move on to questions and comments.

**Questions
and
comments**

10 minutes

Leader responds to questions from members

- ☞ Ask for questions or concerns.
- ☞ Remind members to complete the sign-in sheet.
- ☞ Thank everyone for attending.