



Narcotics Anonymous[®]



**Additional Needs
Resource Information**



Additional Needs Resource Information

Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc.
Chatsworth, California

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GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

This material contains information and suggestions for both new and already-established groups and service committees on how to go about evaluating meeting places for accessibility. We suggest that you look through this booklet to get an idea of the types of physical and other barriers that may be problematic. In addition, the diagnostic survey in Appendix II will be useful in determining the accessibility of your meeting place.

Suggestions for Regional and Area Service Committees

- Compile accessibility information, include it in area directories and forward it to regional PI subcommittees.
- Include RSO and WSO resources on the order form in group starter kits.
- Make sure meeting places for service meetings are accessible.
- Host learning days and/or awareness weekends on additional needs.

Suggestions for Subcommittees

Regional Service Offices (RSOs) are encouraged to:

- Keep available materials for addicts with additional needs in stock.
- Keep PI subcommittees informed as to what is available.
- Make a WSO resource list available.
- Include information in group starter kits.
- Help disseminate information.

Convention committees are encouraged to:

- Determine accessibility to all functions.
- Ensure access to scheduled dances and/or speaker meetings.
- Allow addicts with additional needs to be seated first.
- Request a block of rooms for individuals with additional needs.
- Make sure *all* restrooms are accessible to *all* addicts.
- Schedule workshops on additional needs.
- Get speakers with additional needs for speaker meetings.

SUGGESTIONS SPECIFIC TO NEED

Addicts with Hearing Impairment

There are several types of hearing loss and just as many words to describe them. *Deaf* is generally used to characterize individuals who have lost most or all of their hearing. *Hard of hearing* describes those who can hear only with difficulty. However, these terms most often depict cultural identity more than impairment. For example, those individuals who describe themselves as *deaf* usually identify with the deaf community and do not differentiate between degrees of impairment. They have their own lifestyle, customs, and traditions. Also, those who have been deaf since infancy are generally limited in spoken language skills. On the other hand, those who consider themselves *hard of hearing* usually identify with the hearing community and, in most cases, do not use sign language. Both deaf and hard of hearing persons may wear a hearing aid in one or both ears. However, a hearing aid usually amplifies sounds and filters out background noises, but does not replace normal hearing.

One-on-One Communication

There are many ways for hearing-impaired individuals to communicate. Some communicate through speech or lip reading. Others prefer written notes. Of manual communication methods, sign language is most popular. To learn what works best for any one individual we need to ask.

When first meeting a hearing-impaired person:

- Observe how they communicate with hearing people.
- Ask how you can best communicate.

Each time you start a conversation:

- Get the person's attention.
- Look at them when you speak.
- Avoid standing in front of a light source.
- Allow plenty of time for conversation.

When you are the speaker:

- Speak slowly and clearly in a normal tone of voice.
- Do not put anything in your mouth when speaking.
- Don't move around a lot.
- Use short sentences.
- Ask questions to confirm understanding.

- Give the interpreter time to finish so that the hearing-impaired person can ask questions or join the discussion.
- If written materials are used, provide the interpreter with an advance copy.
- If interpreting steps and traditions becomes a problem, ask the interpreter to contact the WSO for information.
- Inform the interpreter of any concerns that may have arisen during the meeting.
- Ask the deaf member if the service (interpreter) was satisfactory.

How to Find and Fund a Qualified Interpreter

Whether or not to use an interpreter should be the choice of the hearing-impaired person. If they prefer an interpreter, but do not know how to get one, the group (or individuals from the group) may help them do so.

It is very important to make sure we have only qualified interpreters in our meetings. Just because someone knows how to use sign language does not mean they are qualified to interpret the NA message clearly and accurately. Although specifics may vary in different countries, professional interpreters are generally bound by a code of ethics which ensures confidentiality, accuracy, impartiality, and proficiency. As professionals, they also charge a fee for their services. Quite often, this fee is flexible and may be based on a sliding scale. If a group does not have the funds to cover a qualified interpreter, an outside agency for individuals with additional needs may be able to assist with this expense. According to the Seventh Tradition, our groups cannot ask an outside entity to pay for services provided in our meetings, but the individual can. In many cases, the hearing-impaired individual will also have experience with such agencies.

Technology and Other Tools

Some hearing-impaired individuals prefer technological tools which can be used to improve hearing in a group setting. This usually involves a microphone which carries sound directly to a hearing aid. When used in a meeting, it should be announced and emphasized to the group that this is an *amplifying* device, *not* a recorder.

It is also possible for deaf individuals to communicate on the telephone if they have a Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), the most common being a Text Telephone (TTY or TT). However, both the caller and the recipient must have one. Unfortunately, most people—deaf or hearing—do not own a TDD/TTY due to the high cost of owning one.

- Anyone else closing a door should always announce their intention and then wait a few seconds before doing so.
- When driving a visually impaired person home, ask if he or she needs help getting to the door.
- It may only be necessary to help the addict get oriented by giving the location of the walk or entrance such as “ten feet to the left.”
- If the addict needs guidance to the door, go around to the car and wait for him or her to exit.
- Offer your arm and provide guidance.
- Never grab, pull, or push anyone who is visually impaired.
- When in doubt about what level of assistance the addict needs, ask.

Sighted-Guide Techniques

Sighted-guide techniques are based on the practice of having a sighted person (the guide) move ahead of the blind person who maintains contact by touching either the shoulder or upper arm of the guide. Some helpful things to keep in mind when guiding a blind person are:

- The guide should always be on alert for obstacles.
- The guide should be extremely careful when judging height and clearance.
- It is a good idea to describe, in a general way, terrain or surroundings being traversed.
- The guide should always move more slowly on stairs or other complex obstacles.
- When seating a person who is blind, the guide should place his arm on the back of the chair and announce any special information such as “There is a chair with arms and a small table just in front of it.”

Guide dogs: A person using a dog as a sighted guide may need little assistance. The dog is trained to do most of the work. Do not pet a guide dog in harness; it is working and does not have time for this. Never distract the dog while traveling. Guide dogs pose few problems either in a meeting or in a restaurant after the meeting since they are well trained to handle such situations.

Red-tipped White Canes: Some visually impaired persons carry a red-tipped white cane, known as a Hoover cane. These canes may either be one piece or a folding kind that can be folded up and put out of the way. The cane can be used to identify a person who cannot see and is used by the person to travel. The training for such travel is very detailed and the skills are very specific. If a visually impaired person is carrying a white cane, the guide can be sure they know how to use it. A person in the path of a blind person traveling with a cane should either get out of the way or announce their presence. *When someone lays a cane down, it should never be moved without their knowledge.*

Addicts in Wheelchairs

There are many important factors involved in making meeting places accessible for those addicts in wheelchairs or other mobility devices. The following suggestions can help:

- Seek volunteers from the group to greet and assist addicts in wheelchairs.
- Make sure your meeting facility is accessible.
- Include accessibility information in meeting schedules.
- Provide H&I and PI subcommittees with this information.

Wheelchair Accessibility

Accessibility means more than being able to pass through the front door. It also means being able to get into the meeting room itself, to use the restrooms, and reach a water fountain. It means being able to take care of basic needs with dignity. Generally, a facility must meet the following conditions in order to be considered accessible. It must have:

- An operable ramp into the facility.
- Restrooms which allow access to everyone.
- Parking should be near the door or ramp to the building.
- Doorways must be wide enough for entry.
- Bathing facilities (at overnight functions) must be safe for wheelchairs.
- Meeting rooms need to have ample space to maneuver.

Some Hints For Helpers

Folding a wheelchair

- With hands in center of seat, push out with heels of hands.
- Don't put your fingers between the chair frame and the seat—they may be crushed.

Opening a wheelchair

- Remove the seat cushion and pull upward on the seat at the center.
- Don't lift the chair by the armrests as they may come off.

Storing a wheelchair

- Position folded wheelchair next to vehicle's trunk.
- Grasp the struts of the chair only.
- Using your legs—not your back—to lift it, balance the chair on edge of trunk.
- With the full weight on the chair on edge of trunk, tip it up and over, and slide it in.

OTHER BARRIERS TO RECOVERY

In addition to those obstacles mentioned, a major barrier faced by people with additional needs is that of prejudice and negative attitudes. The attitudes may be those held by society, friends, families, or others with additional needs. Fear can cause irrational reactions to those we believe are somehow different from us. Some react with judgment and prejudice, others with pity. Some exert control, while others cannot do enough to help. In all such cases, the individual with additional needs ends up feeling different because they are treated differently.

We can help change such negative thinking by becoming aware of our own attitudes. This is most obvious in the terminology we use on a daily basis when speaking to or of addicts with additional needs. We need to avoid words that diminish the individual's dignity or magnify the disability. Many common labels for individuals with additional needs are demeaning and inaccurate. We should avoid them at all cost.

It is always important to treat addicts with additional needs as we would any other addict coming into the rooms. Addicts who were able to use on their own will be able to recover on their own, though some assistance may be necessary. We must never do for the addict with additional needs what he or she can do alone. Sometimes it is hard to know what help an addict may need, but a good rule of thumb is that a person who needs help will request it.

APPENDIX I

Glossary of Common NA Terms

The therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel. In conclusion, as with *all* addicts, when we help an addict with additional needs, we help carry the message of NA recovery.

Additional needs, addicts with. Additional needs arise from physical challenges such as blindness, hearing impairment, or mobility limitations imposed by use of wheelchairs. Reaching addicts with additional needs and making our meetings and other services more accessible to them is an obligation our fellowship takes very seriously at all levels of its service structure.

Area service committee (ASC). A committee created to provide common services for NA groups in a specific locale. Composed of GSRs, ASC officers, and subcommittee chairpersons. Usually part of a region, to which it sends RCMs.

Closed meetings. NA recovery meetings that are closed to nonaddicts.

Common needs (special interests). A name tag referring to specialized groups formed to provide additional identification for addicts with particular needs or interests in common—for example, men’s or women’s groups and gay or lesbian groups.

Conference-approved service material. Material approved by the World Service Conference that is intended primarily for use within the context of an NA service board or committee.

Fellowship-approved literature. See *NA-approved literature*.

Group service representative (GSR). Elected by an NA group to participate on the group’s behalf in the ASC and the regional assembly.

GSR. See *group service representative*.

H&I. See *hospitals and institutions*.

Home group. The group an NA member calls “home.” Home group membership calls for regular attendance of its recovery meetings, financial and voluntary service support, and participation in conscience-building and decision-making processes.

Hospitals and Institutions (H&I). A field of service usually covered by one ASC subcommittee devoted to carrying the NA message primarily to correctional inmates and treatment facility patients.

NA Way Magazine, The. The NA Fellowship’s quarterly journal, published in various languages.

NA-approved literature. Recovery literature officially sanctioned by the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as given voice by its groups through their delegates to the World Service Conference. Also referred to as “fellowship-approved literature.”

Narcotics Anonymous World Services (NAWS). Refers to Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc., the legal name for the World Board. (See World Board description.)

center, the World Service Office. The board also holds in trust for the NA Fellowship the rights for all their physical and intellectual properties (which includes literature, logos, trademarks, and copyrights) in accordance with the will of the WSC.

World Service Conference (WSC). A deliberative body composed of regional delegates and world-level trusted servants, the WSC provides an effective voice and active conscience for the worldwide NA Fellowship.

World Service Conference Report. The full reports of the World Service Conference and the World Board and its committees.

World Service Office (WSO). World Service Board headquarters (Los Angeles) and branch facilities (Canada, Europe).

WSC. See *World Service Conference*.

WSO. See *World Service Office*.

APPENDIX II

Self-Diagnostic Additional Needs Accessibility Questionnaire

The following questions are designed to help your group evaluate accessibility for addicts with additional needs.

- Does your meeting place have clearly marked, easily accessible parking spaces reserved?
- Is your meeting facility equipped with adequate ramps?
- Are parking lots and walkways well lit?
- Are all doors (gates, etc.) wide enough for a wheelchair to pass through?
- Are elevators available to access meeting rooms not on ground floor?
- Are restrooms accessible?
- Is the group willing to allow an interpreter to accompany a deaf person in both open and closed meetings?

If your group has answered “yes” to all seven questions, then you can consider your meeting accessible. If not, please read through this booklet to get more information.

Please let your area and regional PI committees know once your meeting place is accessible. They will be able to include this information in the area and regional meeting directories.

APPENDIX III

Suggestions for Convention Committees

Below are several suggestions for making our conventions more accessible to addicts with additional needs. It may be helpful for the convention committee to appoint an Additional Needs chairperson to the committee to ensure that the convention is as accessible as possible.

When selecting a hotel and/or convention center, make sure that all areas are accessible to anyone with a physical disability. Many times a facility may claim to be accessible, but has showers with sliding doors, high tub sides, and/or no bars to use for balance, etc. For this reason it is very important that a member of the committee inspect the rooms before contracting with the facility.

- Make sure all restrooms are accessible.
- Ask the hotel to block off some rooms that are fully accessible for persons with additional needs.
- Allow those who are in wheelchairs or who are visually impaired to enter through a separate door prior to the rest of the population entering the room. This information (time and location) should be printed in the program.
- Put a sign on the door to be used for addicts with additional needs. Please do not have the chairperson or anyone from the podium to ask them to move to the front of the room. Space should be made available but we need to allow them to sit wherever they are most comfortable.
- Provide interpreters during meetings. This information should be added to the convention flyer. Also, the program should be coded so that the deaf addicts will know which meetings will be interpreted.
- If interpreters are provided, reserve seats in the front for the deaf participants so that they will be able to see the interpreter. However, do not have the chairperson announce this from the podium. This can be embarrassing. A better strategy would be to include this information on flyers and note in the program that addicts with additional needs may request to have a seat reserved at a workshop or speaker meeting.
- If you have hired an interpreter, make sure that there is room for him/her on the podium. Also, you need to be aware that for any meeting lasting more than two hours, it will be necessary to hire two interpreters.
- If possible, have a workshop on additional needs to help educate our fellowship.

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.