

Narcotics Anonymous Helpline Do's and Don'ts

Do's:

- Do always identify yourself that you are a recovering addict.
- Helpline volunteers are not counselors, crisis workers or medical professionals.
- Do carry a clear and consistent Narcotics Anonymous message.
 - Do be able to listen to the caller.
 - Do remember to be calm, polite, kind, courteous and helpful to the caller.
 - Do encourage the addict to attend a meeting by giving them the day, time, location and directions (if needed).
 - Do present an accurate and positive image of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.
 - Do respond to all calls as soon as possible.
 - Do always have the necessary materials (Basic Text, White Booklet, Meeting List, N.A. pamphlets, etc) in addition to pen and paper close to the telephone, in order to avoid delay and confusion.
 - Do find out what the caller needs. Ask questions.
 - Do be certain that the person requesting help is on the line before identifying yourself as a recovering addict or mentioning Narcotics Anonymous.
 - Do clarify that Narcotics Anonymous is separate from treatment centers or other 12 step programs.
 - Do respect anonymity. Follow the Narcotics Anonymous Twelve Traditions.
 - Do follow up on all calls that were referred to other committees in the Fellowship.
 - Do contact the Helpline chairperson if problems arise.

Don'ts:

- Don't provide opinions of any other 12 step programs - do not endorse any facility or outside enterprise.
 - Don't try to handle calls that you are not qualified to answer.
 - Don't give medical advice. We are not doctors, therapists or counselors, leave this to the professionals!
 - Don't give out other people's names or telephone numbers.
 - Don't answer questions about who was at a NA meeting to anyone (including police officers, probation officers, or significant others). However, general information may be given about NA's make-up.
- For example: variance in size of meetings, explain meeting formats (open-discussion, speaker, etc), NA is open to all age groups, etc.
- Don't glorify active addiction by telling war stories.
 - Don't give referrals to one specific treatment center or detoxification unit, instead inform callers of any and all local treatment centers or give them the generic treatment referral number, the National Treatment Referral Line in the United States. 1-800-662-HELP (4357) <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>
 - Don't use foul language.
 - Don't argue with people whose views of addiction differ from yours or NA's. If the caller does not want to stop using, do not try to persuade him/her to stop. Only he/she can make the decision to stop.
 - Don't make commitments on behalf of the area, region, or NA fellowship.
 - Don't refuse to refer callers in crises, such as someone who wants to commit suicide, to outside crisis agencies.
 - Don't use the phone line as a dating service. Never engage in any type of sexual behavior with any caller!
 - Don't give rides to meetings, refer to The Twelve Step List of volunteers (if available).

THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS TO GET THE PROSPECTIVE NEWCOMER TO AN N.A. MEETING. Continually bring the conversation back to how the caller can get to an NA meeting and end a problem call before the situation escalates. Stay calm under pressure. You are often the first contact someone has with NA, so make sure you use sound judgment and integrity. Remember you are representing Narcotics Anonymous. You are a vital link to Narcotics Anonymous public image.

COMMUNITY

REFERRAL LIST

The following is a sample community referral list, to be used when the caller is asking for help that does not fall within our primary purpose and our traditions. We offer information in the spirit of cooperation. We can provide a list of numbers rather

than any one specific number. We do not recommend one referral over another. We simply provide contact information as a courtesy. (In many parts of the United States and Canada, a community services helpline can be reached by dialing 211. If 211 service is available in your area, it may be the easiest and most complete referral that you can make.)

Child Abuse Hotline	<u>1-855-422-4453</u>
County/City/State Emergency Services	<u>911</u>
Domestic Violence Services	<u>404-873-1766</u>
Drug Crisis Hotline	<u>1-800-662-4357</u>
Families Anonymous	<u>1-800-736-9805</u>
Georgia Free Clinic Network	<u>678-904-3117</u>
Local Homeless Shelter	<u>211 (United Way)</u>
Mental Health Helpline	<u>1-800-662-4357</u>
Nar-Anon	<u>404-633-2421</u>
Poison Control	<u>911 or 1-800-222-1222</u>
Recovery Programs	<u>1-800-338-6745</u>
Rape Crisis Center	<u>404-616-4861</u>
Services for Runaways	<u>1-800-786-2929</u>
Suicide Prevention Hotline	<u>1-800-273-8255</u>

Additional community resources and numbers

_____	_____
_____	_____

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:

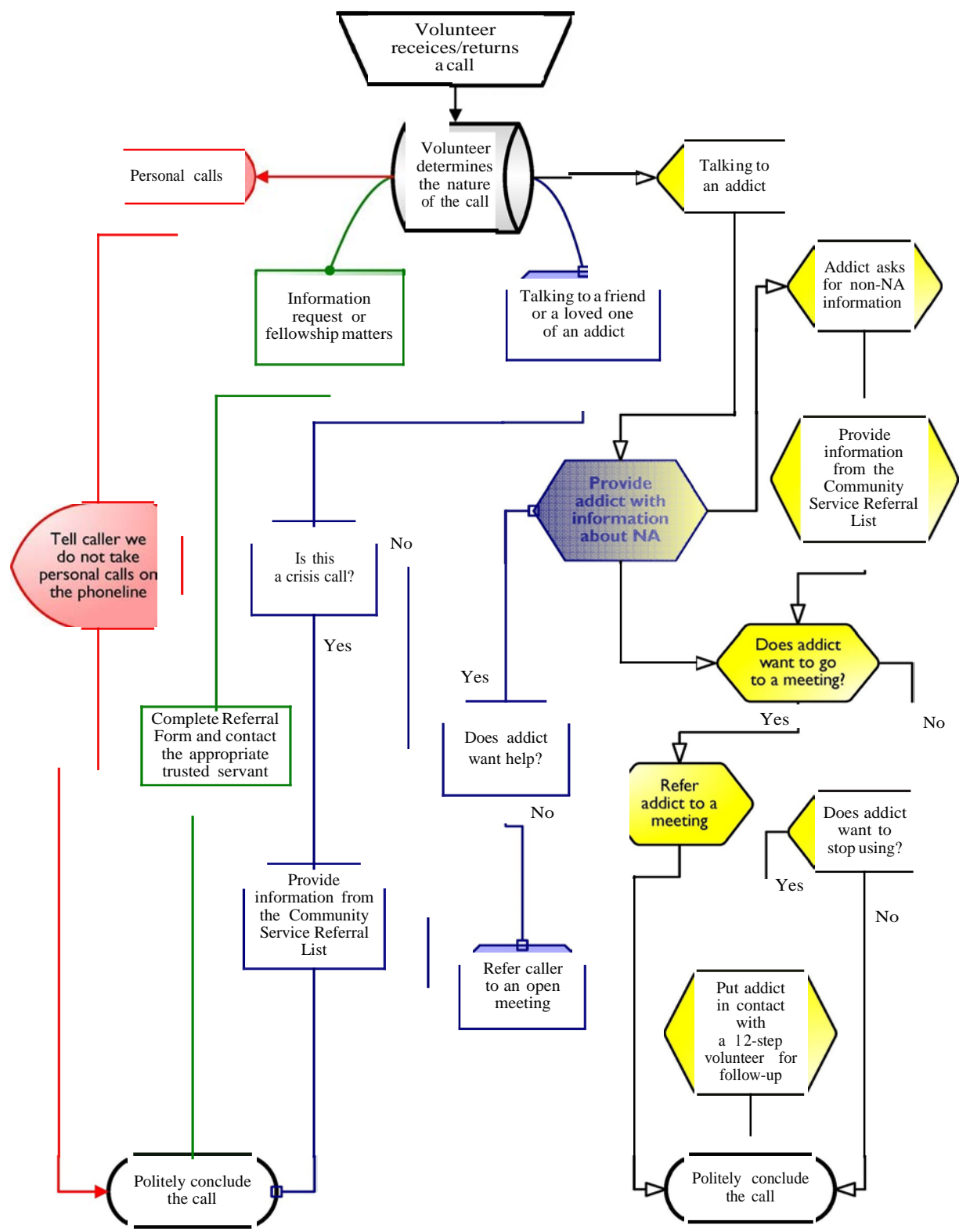
- 🌐 A twelfth step call is usually a request for assistance to get to a meeting. We carry NA's message through twelfth step calls.
- 🌐 A twelfth step call can mean that two or more addicts provide a ride to an NA meeting or that volunteers simply talk with the caller, helping the potential member get 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 phonelines. 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 Phonelines Flowchart considering the above examples.

Phoneline Flowchart



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS PHONELINE VOLUNTEERS' EXPERIENCE WITH CALLS

This resource can be used by volunteers answering phonenumber calls when interacting with addicts, loved ones, professionals, and the community at large. These frequently asked questions are meant to help trusted servants provide clear, consistent, and informative responses. When responding to a question using NA terminology, such as “leader”, please explain to the listener what we mean by that language. In an effort to gain an understanding of the information here, trusted servants can discuss and rehearse the questions and answers below.

What follows are possible answers to questions frequently asked by phonenumber callers.

Questions asked by potential members

Q&A

1

I’ve been using (smoking pot) for three years and I’m not sure if I am an addict. Can NA help?

We suggest attending an NA meeting and speaking with some of the members there. Because NA meetings are a safe place, newcomers are encouraged to ask questions. Also, read some of our literature, which is available at most NA meetings, and decide for yourself. The informational pamphlet *Am I an Addict?* may help you in your decision making.

Q&A

2

I am getting drug-tested by my parole officer; how long does cocaine stay in your system?

Narcotics Anonymous is a twelve-step fellowship for those who think they may have a problem with drugs. We are a self-help, recovery-oriented organization and employ no medical professionals. We do not give any medical advice or opinions, but we do help addicts find recovery through the NA program.

Q&A

3

What should I expect when I go to my first NA meeting? Do I have to talk?

Typically a leader or chairperson will conduct the meeting. There is usually time for participation in which members share about their experience, strength, and hope with staying clean. You do not have to speak during the meeting if you don’t want to. We encourage you to get there a little early so that you can speak with some of the members and pick up some literature before the meeting starts.

Q&A

4

How much does NA cost? Are you counselors?

There are no fees or dues to be a member of NA. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using. We are not professional counselors; we are recovering addicts who share our experience to help each other stay clean.

Q&A
5

I am a nurse by profession and I want to get clean. Where can I find a nurses' meeting?

Some areas have common needs meetings while others do not. This area does/does not have a nurses' NA meeting. We can tell you, however, that recovering addicts from all types of professions attend our meetings.

Q&A
6

I'd like to go to an NA meeting but I don't have a car. Can you help?

Yes, we can try. Where do you live? Let me take your number down and see if I can find a ride for you. (Refer to area Twelfth-Step list)

Note: This may not be a service offered in some areas. If your area is interested in Twelve Step lists, you may refer to the *Public Relations Handbook*, Chapter Nine.

Q&A
7

I'm suicidal and I don't want to live anymore. What should I do?

We strongly suggest contacting the suicide prevention number, which is _____, or 911 to get immediate assistance.

Questions asked by loved ones

Q&A
1

My boyfriend is using drugs, stealing, and cheating. What can I do to help him? Will you call him?

Because Narcotics Anonymous is a self-help program, addicts must have the desire to stop using. Once he is ready to stop using drugs, please have him call us so we can direct him to an NA meeting in his area. In the meantime, you may want to call Nar-Anon or Families Anonymous. Although we are not affiliated with these organizations, we are happy to provide their telephone numbers.

Q&A
2

My son/daughter is using drugs and wants to stop taking drugs. Can I go with him/her to their first meeting?

You may attend an "open" NA meeting with your son/daughter. Open meetings welcome family members and the community at large. Closed meetings are for addicts only. Let me check our meeting list, so I can give you several choices of open meetings...

Q&A
3

Will you call me if my son/daughter does not show up to meetings regularly?

No, we are not able to do this. Because this is a self-help program, it is not our position to monitor an addict's willingness to attend meetings.

Questions asked by community members

Q&A

1

I heard that my old friend, Jane Smith, is in NA. Can I have her phone number?

We are not at liberty to give out contact information for individuals who may or may not be members.

Q&A

2

Drugs are being sold in my apartment complex. Can you come and arrest them?

Narcotics Anonymous is a twelve-step fellowship for those who think they may have a problem with drugs. We are a self-help, recovery-oriented organization and employ no law enforcement professionals.

REFERRAL FORM

For referring calls to the area or region

There are times when trusted servants within the area or at the regional service committee may be more experienced with answering certain phonenumber requests. This is a sample referral form for the tracking of such calls. This form will allow us to follow the referral to ensure that the request is answered and the callers' needs are met.

Today's date _____ Time of call _____

Phonenumber Volunteer _____

Caller's name _____

Name of agency or organization _____

Caller's telephone number _____ ext _____

Alternate telephone number _____

Time & date when caller is available to be called back _____

Caller or agency's email address _____

Reason(s) for calling

___ Atmosphere of recovery issue

___ Leadership issue

___ Predator issue

___ Public image issue

___ Request from media

___ Problem with meeting at facility

___ Request for NA literature

___ Request for NA presentation

___ Twelfth-Step call request


___ Request for meeting directories

___ Request for meeting at facility

___ Request for activities schedule

___ Request for NA booth

___ Other (describe in detail): _____

Referred request to:  **Area**  **Region**

Committee member's name and position: _____

Notes: _____