

WHAT IS OUTREACH?

Most dictionary definitions of "outreach" describe it as: to reach beyond, to surpass. In Narcotics Anonymous, we use the term to describe an array of services designed specifically to insure that any NA member, group, or meeting can participate in the NA service structure and receive services if they so desire. The goals of outreach service are to assist groups in solving problems that may impede their growth or threaten their survival and to help groups overcome many kinds of isolation by encouraging increased knowledge, contact, and exposure to NA as a whole and to the NA service structure. The fundamental approach in outreach efforts, often described as support services for groups and service committees, is helping groups and committees to help themselves. In many ways, this really is reaching beyond or surpassing our normal or routine service efforts.

Outreach service is meant to complement rather than duplicate the activities of any existing service committee, board, or the WSO. Many of our service committees, to be effective, must prioritize the nature and schedule for delivery of their services due to the limits imposed by available human and financial resources. Sometimes this results in a lack of basic communication and support to NA members and groups. Formalized outreach subcommittees appear around our fellowship because they provide a systematic approach for one group of addicts to help another by serving these basic needs.

The activities of existing outreach subcommittees vary widely, each one tailored to the needs of those it serves. There are, however, common themes and tasks shared by many who participate in outreach efforts. Describing what outreach subcommittees do may be the best way to define outreach. While none do all, most outreach subcommittees do perform some of the following functions:

- * Provide a direct line-of-communication to isolated members and groups, in and out of institutions
- * Presents or take part in activities designed to bring isolated members and groups together with each other and the NA community
- * Conduct workshops on group level service, provide orientation sessions for GSRs, and develop GSR information packets
- * Conduct outreach workshops at learning events
- * Facilitating, encouraging and improving GSR attendance at area meetings
- * Assisting groups in need of support and group trusted servants
- * Helping to register groups with service committees and the WSO
- * Compiling or advising in the compilation of meeting schedules
- * Developing or maintaining an informative map of service boundaries
- * Encouraging members to be involved in NA service
- * Helping members and groups to learn about ordering literature and receiving NA publications
- * Facilitating the development and availability of simplified service materials
- * Help groups to provide for members with additional needs

For discussion purposes, we can describe three general categories of outreach service; extended, community, and institutional.

Extended Outreach

Extended outreach efforts focus on communication as a way to minimize the isolation created by geographical, language, and cultural barriers. The main objective is to bring isolated members or groups together with other parts of NA. These services can include; facilitating correspondence, coordination of long distance travels to support groups, maintaining contact information files, helping plan activities for those who could not otherwise come together, and collecting information for outreach newsletters. Compiling information about differing cultural practices and crossing national borders can also be very helpful to group members from dissimilar cultures.

Community Outreach

Whether in an emerging NA community or an established urban setting, fellowship development seems to follow a very similar process. Often, alternating spurts of growth followed by plateaus characterize this development process. In many cities or communities where NA already exists, some type of service structure has been developed to meet local needs. In these situations, it is fairly common to find NA members or outreach subcommittees providing support services to the existing NA communities in countryside, suburban, and/or metropolitan settings. The focus in this setting is on participation. Assisting groups in need of support, helping GSRs to attend area meetings, helping groups to become re-involved in the local service structure, and helping groups to register are the primary functions of community oriented outreach subcommittees.

Institutional Outreach

Institutional outreach efforts, designed to allow groups in institutions to participate in the service structure, can include personal contact, correspondence, newsletters, and literature mailings. These services are directed at NA meetings that are not H&I panels, yet have been started in institutions, long-term facilities, prisons, state hospitals, military bases, and nursing homes. These meetings and groups spring up from a variety of sources. Often, NA is not available at all until our hospital and institutions committees conduct a series of panel presentations. Sometime later, staff professionals, patients, or inmates start an NA meeting. Sometimes, meetings in an institutional setting result from one or more recovering addicts becoming incarcerated. Also, professionals who have learned about NA through our public information efforts start NA groups in various settings. Regardless of how they came to exist, these NA meetings can easily become isolated from other NA groups and service committees. Sometimes, the only link to NA for a group in one of these facilities is contact with an outreach subcommittee or registration with the World Service Office.

Some NA communities have used outreach services for many years, and some are just now considering the idea. To the struggling group or the isolated member, it is often outreach services that rekindle the hope and spirit of "Together We Can" as a theme for recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

Outreach subcommittees work to promote growth and unity by bringing a variety of groups or meetings into contact with the service structure, allowing new and existing elements of the fellowship to benefit from shared

experience. Funding comes from the service committee to which they are responsible. In some places outreach efforts are a regional activity. Elsewhere, area subcommittees provide these services directly with a regional subcommittee serving as a forum or coordinating body. It is important to emphasize that the mission of outreach activities is to assist groups to become self-sustaining, and not to enforce a uniform understanding of traditions, foster dependency nor to simply start new groups. Successful outreach committees have learned to avoid creating an additional level of structural bureaucracy or barrier to the direct communication between new, emerging, or isolated groups and the rest of the fellowship and service structure.

At the 1992 World Service Conference annual meeting, the WSC Outreach Ad Hoc Committee was created to provide a resource to outreach subcommittees in their efforts to develop and sustain NA groups and to encourage their involvement in NA service. WSC Outreach works closely with the World Service Office to assist in the formation of new outreach subcommittees, compile and distribute resource information, and coordinate an outreach network for communication. To register your outreach committee or receive other outreach bulletins and resource information, please contact the WSC Outreach Ad Hoc Committee, c/o World Service Office.

OUTREACH WORKSHOP PRESENTATION GUIDE

Introduction

This bulletin is offered as a guide for use by any member of NA to present an educational workshop on outreach. Feel free to use the material as presented here or improvise in whatever way suits the needs or circumstances in your location. We recommend using several different presenters, one for each subtopic. Some presentations of this material have questions and answers with each topic, and some wait until the sharing session of the workshops. The information in this bulletin is drawn from many sources and may be tailored to suit any audience.

Workshops of this type are an excellent way to introduce members to what outreach is, what it does, what it is not, and how outreach is accomplished. When conducting service workshops or learning days, efforts should be made to present an overview of NA services that is easily understood and not intimidating. The goal should be to show how members can participate and the benefits of doing so. Workshop presenters are encouraged to contact the WSO for additional information and assistance. Establishing this communication early will be of great benefit to anyone interested in the topic. Information contained in our bulletin, "What is Outreach," will also be extremely helpful in conducting an outreach workshop.

General Workshop Topics

- The Idea of Outreach
- Between the "I"s
- Three Types of Outreach
- Functions of Outreach
- Outreach to NA Groups
- What Outreach Is Not
- Available Resources
- Forum/Sharing Session

The Idea of Outreach

The intent of outreach is simply to insure that any group, meeting, or addict who wishes can be linked to our service structure, receive services and participate in the NA service structure.

Some form of "outreach" exists in virtually every emerging NA community. Usually this takes the form of one or a few members with the energy to get together and travel long distances to provide support to an isolated group or institutional meeting. During the 1980's some of these spontaneous efforts pulled together and subcommittees were formed in some locations. Often, they received enthusiastic support to help improve communication, plan related activities for isolated group members, and provide direct support to isolated groups or institutional meetings. As new subcommittee members were trained, committee continuity and consistency resulted in more groups becoming involved and linked to the fellowship. Today's outreach committees draw much of their experience from these earlier efforts and continue to rely on the principle of one group of addicts helping another. It is one way our fellowship has been able to spread from city to city and country to country. The emergence of formalized outreach

committees has made possible a more systematic approach to providing these services.

Currently, some Narcotics Anonymous outreach committees exist at every level of service. Although their activities vary widely, they seem to share a few common goals. First, outreach committees assist NA groups to solve problems that may impede the group's growth and may even threaten the group's survival. These committees also help groups to enhance their ability to carry a message of recovery through greater knowledge of and exposure to the NA service structure. Finally, outreach committees help NA groups to overcome the pitfalls of isolation by encouraging increased contact with the fellowship as a whole.

The focus of outreach is within NA. From long distance travel to correspondence to getting GSRs to show up at the ASC to registering groups--all this is within the realm of outreach.

Between the "I"s

NA outreach service is designed to complement other services, not to duplicate them. Outreach subcommittees are formed because they fill a need. Outreach service efforts can assist a broad range of isolated and institutional groups and members that sometimes fall outside the scope of NA's H&I and PI service. For example, our public information committees work with those outside NA, helping them to know what we offer to addicts seeking recovery. Our hospitals and institutions committees conduct panels in facilities where NA is not available otherwise, helping addicts directly to find recovery. As a result of our PI and H&I efforts, professionals, facility staff, inmates, or patients often start an NA meeting in an institution, and it can easily become isolated from services and communication with NA as a whole. To these struggling groups and isolated member, it is often outreach that rekindles the hope that "together we can."

Three Types of Outreach

For discussion purposes, we can describe three general categories of outreach service; extended, community, and institutional. Where geographical, language and cultural barriers are involved, we find extended outreach. In extended outreach the focus is on communication to help bring isolated members together or in touch with "the rest" of NA. Institutional outreach services often take the form of physical support, correspondence, newsletters, and literature mailings to NA members and groups in a facility where access is limited. Community outreach occurs in countryside, suburban and metropolitan settings where NA already exists and some form of service structure has been developed to serve local needs. The focus in a community setting is on participation; assisting groups in need of support, getting GSRs to area meetings, and registering groups.

Around our fellowship there are many examples of each of the three main types of outreach. Contact information and some resource material from many of these locations can be obtained from the World Service Office.

Functions of Outreach Subcommittees

In some places outreach services are conducted at the regional or national level. Elsewhere, area subcommittees do the actual work, with a regional subcommittee serving to coordinate, train, and provide a problem solving forum. Regardless of the structure, each outreach subcommittee appears to perform tasks directly

related to the needs of their service territory and the resources available. Following is a list of some of the functions different outreach subcommittees are performing. Few committees provide all these services, but many of them are functions of most outreach subcommittees.

- * Provide a direct line-of-communication to isolated members and groups, in and out of institutions
- * Presents or take part in activities designed to bring isolated members and groups together with each other and the NA community
- * Conduct workshops on group level service, provide orientation sessions for GSRs, and develop GSR information packets
- * Conduct outreach workshops at learning events
- * Facilitating, encouraging and improving GSR attendance at area meetings
- * Assisting groups in need of support and group trusted servants
- * Helping to register groups with service committees and the WSO
- * Compiling or advising in the compilation of meeting schedules
- * Developing or maintaining an informative map of service boundaries
- * Encouraging members to be involved in NA service
- * Helping members and groups to learn about ordering literature and receiving NA publications
- * Facilitating the development and availability of simplified service materials
- * Help groups to provide for members with additional needs

Outreach to NA Groups

To the greatest extent possible, we work in teams, not alone. Two or more people visiting a struggling group can offer support during the meeting, provide information and offer suggestions in conversation with group trusted servants. Answering questions about the purpose and functions of the area and its subcommittees are often beneficial during these visits.

Assisting new groups to obtain starter materials and register with their service committees and the WSO helps them to establish communication with other NA groups in their area or region. In some places, outreach subcommittees provide a "wake-up" call a couple of days prior to the ASC to groups that haven't attended in a while. Another service often performed by area outreach subcommittee is to provide brief training and orientation sessions for new GSRs, often done in a quick seminar format 30 minutes before an ASC meeting. The improved participation and communication that results from GSRs that know their job and how their committee works usually helps build area unity and stability.

What Outreach Is Not

It is important to remember that the focus of outreach activities is to assist groups to sustain themselves. Outreach is not intended to be a committee that starts new meetings. For outreach committee members to become tied down supporting one meeting every week would be unfair to the area and a disservice to the group. Committee members can assist the NA members who start meetings by temporarily attending, education, starter kits, announcements, and registration. Successful outreach committees have avoided creating a structure that fosters dependency or sets up an additional barrier to groups

having direct contact with the rest of the fellowship's service structure.

It is important for outreach members not to "judge" groups in how they conduct their meetings. Outreach has sometimes, mistakenly, been perceived as an NA "police department" that presents groups with citations for traditions' violations, or a "swat team" that attends meetings for the purpose of telling a group what to 'do. Outreach committees need to remain clear that they are trying to help the group and their mission is not to promote or enforce uniform understandings of traditions, service concepts or proper NA language. Committee members so inclined should be encouraged to trust that isolated group members will develop their own understanding of NA's principles through increased contact with NA as a whole.

Another pitfall to avoid is identifying with any political factions. Outreach is about group service and must avoid being perceived as taking sides in local controversies. It is important in outreach visits to respect each groups' autonomy. The integrity of the outreach subcommittee depends on its ability to provide unbiased, accurate information and then step aside and let the group decide. This is particularly true when an area grows to a point where dividing into more than one area is being considered. The role of outreach in this situation is simply to strengthen groups and develop ASC unity. Outreach should support whatever process the ASC chooses to guide its future and encourage the groups to make their own choices on issues.

For these reasons, outreach subcommittees usually spend significant time discussing how to introduce themselves and clarify their function so as to avoid leaving any group feeling threatened. Outreach may visit, offer suggestions, gather information and even make recommendations. It is the responsibility of the local NA members, groups, and the service committee to address issues.

Available Resources

Outreach subcommittees have many resources to draw upon and use in their efforts. Following is a short list of available resources.

Local service committees
Group Booklet
Group Information Pamphlet (IP #2)
Group Treasurers Handbook
Temporary Working Guide to the Service Structure (TWGSS)
Outreach Bulletins (list available from WSO)
WSO Group Services Department
WSC Outreach Ad Hoc Committee

Open Forum/Sharing Session

The floor should be opened to answer any questions and encourage discussion about outreach. This is also a good time to elaborate on any topics of interest and encourage participants to share about the personal rewards of outreach service.

**CREATING AN OUTREACH
SUBCOMMITTEE**

When we talk of bringing about a new service subcommittee there is often a mix of both hope and concern expressed. There may be fear of creating yet another subcommittee with a budget and in need of support. On the other hand, the hope for a workable new way to "carry the message" and help addicts generally brings unity and fulfillment. This bulletin is about creating an outreach subcommittee. Some of this information may apply to other efforts, though most of this material is specific to outreach.

We offer this process as a way to increase awareness and understanding of outreach, and help service committees in identifying outreach needs and in shaping a mechanism to meet those needs. Any productive service effort requires us to build consensus, develop support, and devote time and effort to many individual commitments. Experience shows that outreach is no different, and the process for creating an outreach subcommittee should be as open and inclusive as possible. The following outline is general in nature and suggests the relevant topics discussed by others along the way.

Creating An Outreach Subcommittee

- I. Is there a need? Are there members or groups who are isolated in any way? Do group business meetings, service committee open forums, subcommittee meetings, phonline workers, confusion at the ASC, suggest that some members and groups want to be more involved than they are able to be?
- II. Gather Information about outreach
 - A. Contact WSO Group Services, see outreach bulletin "What Is Outreach," visit nearby areas/regions with outreach
- III. Would outreach address the concerns expressed? Are the volunteers and financial resources available? Is there another alternative? Does the ASC or RSC want to know more?
- IV. Plan and present an outreach workshop (see outreach bulletin "Outreach Workshop Presentation Guide")
- V. Draft a statement of intent and purpose and propose an ad hoc outreach subcommittee to the ASC or RSC
- VI. If approved, form ad hoc outreach subcommittee. Set regular time and place for subcommittee meeting, contact WSO Group Services again, receive additional materials and samples, register your ad hoc outreach subcommittee
 - A. Initial task will be to examine the statement of intent and purpose and refine it to include a plan for implementation. Gather more input from members and other subcommittees, work together to complete ad hoc outreach subcommittee guidelines. Present proposed guidelines to service committee
 - B. Ad hoc outreach subcommittee begins outreach tasks to address needs
 1. Ad hoc outreach committee reports on progress and problems at each

regularly scheduled service committee meeting

2. Maintain communication with WSC Outreach Ad Hoc and send WSO a copy of approved guidelines and any other successful materials so others may borrow from your experience

VII. Reassessment. Is it working? Shall we continue? Ad hoc or standing committee?

Notes

The "Gather Information" stage is basically what would be happening anyway when an idea is presented. To do a good job though, we suggest digging a little deeper than local current wisdom. Contact the WSO Group Services Department and gain some new insights. Talk to members in other places that are doing outreach. Become a resource of information about outreach.

Presenting an outreach workshop is not as hard as it sounds. Follow our WSC outreach bulletin "Outreach Workshop Presentation Guide" and add to it as may be appropriate. The intent here is to introduce interested members and especially your service committee to this new idea called outreach. We recommend a panel style format and make sure to have time for questions and sharing. Attendance will be better if flyers are distributed announcing the workshop. Refreshments also help. The goals of the workshop are to provide information, generate interest and pull together a few interested members who wish to follow through with this process.

Drafting a statement of intent and purpose is easily accomplished with a few interested members working around a table. With this demonstration of commitment your service committee may be willing to appoint the work group as an ad hoc. The initial task of the ad hoc outreach subcommittee will be to refine the statement of intent and purpose for proposal to the service committee, including plans for implementation.

The rest of the process is fairly self explanatory. We can assure you there will be lots of questions. Sometimes the best answer is "I don't know, though I'll find out." We encourage you to call the WSO and to keep in touch with members doing outreach in other places. When it comes right down to it--people won't expect you to be a guru on outreach. What they will decide is if they've developed a measure of trust in your integrity and ability to follow through. The key to this process is: keep following through.

Why have a GSR?

Just as "an addict alone is in bad company," the NA group that does not participate in the service structure will most likely struggle without the spiritual support that the ASC has to offer. The participation of the Group Service Representative (GSR) and the GSR-Alternate at the Area Service Committee (ASC) meeting can make a big difference in the chances of a group's survival.

Shared experiences and services are key to helping the group carry the message. Your GSR is the bearer of that experience and service. As long as each group carries out its responsibilities by being an active part of the local area, by choosing a GSR and supporting the service structure, the area will sustain itself and provide services to the addict that a group cannot provide on its own.

Some of the services offered by an ASC may include: operating a phoneline, providing literature distribution, speaking to the public about NA, reaching out to addicts in isolation and in institutions, printing a newsletter, and organizing functions such as workshops and unity activities. These services vary from area to area. Your GSR is your group's voice in how these services are delivered.

Some isolated groups may belong to areas that hold their ASC meetings a long distance away. If your group is in this situation, contact your ASC for possible solutions so that your representative can fully participate. Some suggestions include, but are not limited to, travel subsidization, proxy (mail in) votes on issues sent back to all groups, and hosting an ASC meeting closer to your home group location.

In some cases GSRs from groups isolated in institutions have a hard time participating in their ASC meetings. Some of the ways GSRs in institutions can participate are as follows:

- Members from the outside may get clearance to attend a meeting in an institution, make that their home group, and carry the group's conscience to the ASC.
- Member(s) from within the institution may get clearance to attend the ASC.
- On occasion, the ASC may actually be held within the institution.
- Conscience may be carried by proxy vote as mentioned above.

These examples are being utilized today, but your solution needs to fit your situation and facility.

Who should the GSR be?

Next to the individual member, our groups are the most important unit of the service structure. They have been established to fulfill our primary purpose by carrying the message through holding recovery meetings. The position of GSR is vital to the stability and unity of that service unit.

GSRs act as a resource to home group members by being well informed about most aspects of service in NA and by helping to guide members into the different branches of

service available for all to participate in. There is always much service work to be accomplished in a local area. A GSR who shares the group's enthusiasm and knowledge can help by getting other members involved in the type of service they will enjoy.

The informational pamphlet, *The Group*, suggests that a GSR have the following qualifications:

- The willingness and desire to serve.
- A history of recovery in NA (suggested minimum of one year clean time).
- An understanding and working knowledge of the twelve steps and twelve traditions of NA.
- Active participation in the group they are to serve.

A GSR-Alternate should have the same qualifications as a GSR except for the suggestion of six months continuous abstinence. The GSR and the GSR-Alt. is each elected at the home group business meeting for a one-year term. The position of GSR-Alt. provides the group with a member who is training to be a GSR. The GSR-Alt. is expected to stand for the position of GSR at the end of their term. In some groups, the suggested clean time is waived according to how new the group is and who is interested in serving. The group may also choose to elect a GSR-Alt. only and allow that person to grow into the position.

The GSR should be chosen carefully, because this person will become the group's link with the rest of NA's service structure. The group places its trust in this person to carry group conscience, and usually the group's donation, to the ASC and to return to the group business meeting with clear, concise, objective reports on ASC activity.

What do we do now?

Once a home group has chosen its GSR and GSR-Alt., it is responsible for providing these members with continued support and guidance so that these trusted servants can carry out their duties in the spirit and atmosphere of recovery. By responsibly choosing a GSR, the group is free to focus on its primary purpose -- "to carry the message to the addict who still suffers."

As stated in the *Narcotics Anonymous Temporary Working Guide to our Service Structure (TWGSS)*, GSRs are "the link that binds the groups together in the performance of our primary purpose." One of the duties of a GSR is to attend the local Area Service Committee (ASC) meetings. If you don't know which area your group belongs to, contact World Service Office, Inc., PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA, 91409-9999, USA.

The function of the ASC is to serve the groups that are part of it. In order to do this, the ASC usually meets monthly. The ASC is made up of GSRs and GSR-Alternates from the local groups, subcommittee chairpersons (Outreach, Hospitals and Institutions, Public Information, Literature, etc.), and an administrative committee consisting of a chairperson, vice-chairperson, treasurer, secretary, Area Service Representative (ASR), and ASR-Alt.

The GSRs of all the groups attending present group reports at the area meeting that may include the following information: group news and activities, group problems/strengths, location/time/format changes, donations

to the ASC, group size, and subcommittee sign-up sheets. Many ASCs offer a forum for GSRs to discuss group problems and get feedback from other GSRs who may have faced similar challenges.

The GSR may order literature at the ASC meeting for the group from the area or regional literature stockpiles. Another important function is to verify that the group is listed on the area and regional meeting lists and is registered with the World Service Office (WSO).

In turn, the GSR reports matters dealt with at the ASC back to the group at the monthly business meeting. Such matters may include: other group news; elections/vacancies; subcommittee activities; ASC financial status; subcommittee sign-up sheets; area activities, workshops, conventions, campouts, retreats, etc.; regional and world level service information; business items referred to the group's monthly business meeting for group conscience; and shared solutions to group problems.

How to be an effective GSR

In order to fulfill their duties, it is suggested that the GSR share the responsibilities with the GSR-Alt. (who acts as the GSR in their absence). It is suggested that the GSR possess the necessary service materials, including handbooks, guidelines, and area policies. Some of these items can be purchased from the area or regional literature stockpiles, while others are made available to all area level trusted servants at no charge. GSRs are encouraged to ask questions of other ASC members, past and present, to gain shared experiences.

It is suggested that GSRs become involved in other aspects of area service by participating on a subcommittee. Information about these subcommittees can be accessed from the subcommittee chairperson or other subcommittee member, as well as from the handbooks and by attending subcommittee meetings and activities.

While attending the ASC meeting, the GSR should remember that he or she is representing the group. Attending the entire ASC meeting, listening, taking plenty of notes, and voting with the group's conscience in mind (not personal opinion) are of utmost importance. The GSR should remember that their group may have no other way to get the information that is passed along at the ASC meeting. An ineffective GSR could keep a group in isolation; on the other hand, an attentive, objective GSR can help the group stay well-informed and thrive.

When reporting back to the home group, the GSR should cover all the information necessary in a brief, clear, and enthusiastic manner. Caution should be exercised not to offer an opinion unless asked to do so by the group. Some GSRs choose to make all information available in written format, only bringing up for discussion in the business meeting those issues that the ASC has asked be discussed in groups. However a GSR chooses to report, making sure that all group members have access to as much information as possible will go a long way toward promoting unity.

Available resources:

Narcotics Anonymous has the following publications available for further information about GSRs.

IP #2 -- *The Group*

The Group Booklet

Temporary Working Guide to our Service Structure

The Twelve Concepts of NA Service

NA Basic Text

It Works: How and Why

The Group Starter Kit

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