

**OUTREACH
BOOKLET**

For Approval at WSC '98

Preface

During the early 1980's, Narcotics Anonymous began to develop in many parts of the world where there was no NA. As a result of this growth, some NA groups and service committees became involved in a variety of "outreach" activities. Many early outreach efforts started because members in developing NA communities had a desire to stay clean, and make contact with others who were trying to do the same. Over time, as some of these NA communities grew larger, the "outreach" activities became more formalized through organized committees.

By the late 1980's, outreach committees had become active in different parts of the fellowship at the area and regional levels. As a result, the WSC Ad-Hoc Outreach Committee was formed to write an outreach handbook. Their efforts in gathering information from functioning outreach committees made it clear that outreach encompassed a wide range of activities based on local needs. This broad scope made writing an all-encompassing outreach handbook virtually impossible. The project was then given to the World Service Board of Trustees to complete the task.

This booklet was written to promote and encourage outreach efforts. Its purpose is to provide general information on outreach; not to list policies and committee guidelines. Therefore, outreach is presented as a general concept, rather than a list of specific tasks. We have intentionally taken this direction to avoid dictating to committees the "correct" approach to structuring their outreach efforts. We hope this booklet will help the development of outreach committees¹ that provide services as needed by the local fellowship they serve, and allow for the flexibility to change as the fellowship grows.

Introduction

Outreach efforts have always existed in Narcotics Anonymous, though they may not have been recognized as outreach, or called outreach by the members engaged in them. "Outreach" may have been several members piling in a car to drive to support a newly formed NA community. Or it may have been several members who had to travel long distances to get to a meeting themselves in order to stay clean. It may have been planning a picnic, sports, games, or other fun event with members from another nearby town. For many, anything done to help another addict find recovery is simply twelfth-step work. While that's correct, these kinds of activities are also outreach activities. As local NA communities grow, these activities usually become more formalized through organized committees.

Outreach

The main purpose of outreach is to help overcome the isolation that hinders the growth and survival of our groups. The focus tends to be on groups that are geographically isolated, but may also include assistance to groups isolated by such things as personal choice, language, cultural differences, or location within a locked facility not served by a Hospitals and Institutions Committee. While the main emphasis of this booklet is outreach efforts that are aimed at bringing geographically isolated NA members into the larger community, outreach committees are not limited to those activities. What outreach does should depend upon local needs.

Outreach efforts can range from supporting groups that are far away to informing members that local groups are in need of support. This can be done simply through meeting

¹In this booklet, the term "outreach committee" is used to denote both formalized committees and members who engage in these works where no such committee exists.

attendance and sharing recovery. outreach committees work closely with H&I and Public Information committees because each type of service has some areas of overlap. Just like H&I and PI committees, outreach committees organize and/or participate in workshops and learning days. In urban centers, outreach efforts may involve attendance at groups that have not participated in the service structure for some time. In some cases, these groups may have withdrawn their involvement because of resentments. More often, it is because the group lacks members willing and/or qualified to represent the group in the service structure. Members engaging in outreach to such isolated groups can promote re-involvement through direct, open discussion of concerns. This can also recreate enthusiasm for service work within the group. Some groups may not want their isolation ended, and this decision should be respected.

NA groups often communicate with one another via flyers, newsletters, and phone calls. These are very useful tools for communication; however, face-to-face contact between addicts is the most effective method. When visiting groups, it is very important not to negatively judge the way local groups operate. Many outreach efforts have been hampered by "experts" arriving to tell local members how things should be done. Such advice is rarely appreciated, nor does it usually further the goals of outreach. Outreach work is done to end isolation and promote growth, not to spread some homogeneous approach to recovery in NA.

How do we find isolated groups to reach out to? Some are discovered by members who are traveling for work or pleasure, and others appear on World Service Office mailing lists. In some cases, the groups may be isolated, but its members travel to other NA meetings. Eventually, groups become known through a variety of sources.

Outreach committees do not start or run groups. The time commitment is too great, and would detract from other duties. Starting or running groups is best left to the individuals who will be attending those meetings regularly.

In general, outreach committees typically form as the local fellowship grows. As the number of groups in an area increases, it can become difficult to manage this type of service work informally. Duplication of effort, confusion about who should be doing what, haphazard efforts—all are indicators that it may be time for outreach efforts to be formalized through the creation of a committee. Outreach committees should be organized to encourage service work, and their structure reflect locally identified needs. Having guidelines can be important, but they should promote service, not hinder it.

One of the ways we try to bring groups into the larger NA community is to get them involved in the service structure. Area and regional outreach committees work to make this happen. Members of these committees are available to answer questions about NA, and to share their experience, strength, and hope concerning the early stages of group development. Sometimes this requires outreach committees to travel to the isolated group(s). With help, these isolated groups/meetings may be able to form a new area service committee, or join an existing area service committee. The outreach committee usually gets its expenses paid by its respective ASC or RSC.

Outreach committees can be involved in providing communication, support, and some limited services to these meetings, groups, and/or areas. The services they provide may include establishing and maintaining some form of ongoing communication, regular visits, sharing experience about services issues, sharing information on how and where to order literature and register with the WSO, and providing information about other meetings that may be nearby.

Some NA groups are isolated not because they don't know about the rest of NA, but because NA itself is very new to the community. In situations like this, the isolation is only temporary. As more addicts in the community find recovery and NA grows, the groups will form organized services, the local members will gain experience with both recovery and providing service, and eventually, the new NA community will no longer need the services of an outreach committee. In fact, the new community may then be in a position to take on outreach efforts itself. We've seen this over and over as NA takes root and grows in places it has never been before.

In other cases, the NA community may remain small and may need the support of an outreach committee for the foreseeable future. This may be because the area is not heavily populated or because of social, cultural, or linguistic factors. In these cases, the outreach efforts may center on helping the fledgling NA community overcome the difficulties that are impeding its growth and stability.

Helping Struggling Groups and Areas

Outreach to isolated NA groups provides a beneficial and much needed service. A group that is the recipient of these efforts is assured of its welcome in the fellowship. The group will feel a sense of belonging, and, consequently, will take an interest in the workings of NA, supplying trusted servants who will invest time and energy into the growth and development of NA as a whole. Outreach committees should express to isolated groups that they are an important part of the NA Fellowship, and are not alone. The very presence of such "outside support" confirms that carrying the message is the primary purpose of NA.

It is very helpful to arrange regular visits to an isolated group, perhaps on a weekly or monthly basis. In addition to making group visits themselves, outreach committee members should encourage members of an isolated group to attend NA meetings that are within traveling distance. This can be helped by coordinating rides and by preparing to welcome a visiting member within the established NA community.

Outreach committees often assist isolated groups with basic public information efforts, such as ensuring that the group is on local meeting and phoneline lists, and that the information is updated as needed. Outreach committees can also ensure the group is registered with the World Service Office so it can receive important information about recovery literature, conventions, service activities, and issues that may affect NA as a whole. Often, it is the local outreach committee that knows more about the NA groups in the area than any other part of the service structure.

Ongoing communication and follow-up visits are essential. Letters and telephone calls are a committee responsibility, however, they may also occur as a result of new friendships. Ideally, follow-up visits should include some of the same outreach members involved in the initial contact trip, however, follow-up should not hinge on this. A visit to a new or isolated group will raise hopes among that group's members. If outreach efforts stop there, it may leave the new group feeling more isolated than before. This can be avoided by exchanging phone numbers; sending flyers of upcoming events such as dances, conventions, retreats, learning days, and area and regional service meetings.

To the greatest extent possible, outreach should be done in teams. At least two people visiting a struggling group not only give support by attending the meeting, but also provide information and offer suggestions in conversations with the group trusted servants after the recovery meeting. Answering questions and explaining the purpose and functions of the area and its committees are also an important part of these visits.

Contact should be made with members of the local fellowship before the first visit in order to learn about the group's needs, and to ensure the visit is welcome. Outreach members need to spend time discussing how to introduce themselves at groups, and to clarify their function to avoid uncomfortable situations. It is important for visiting members to respect the autonomy of the groups. Make sure you have accurate information as to the meeting time, day, and location. Before leaving, phone ahead to confirm that they will hold the meeting that day.

Members of outreach committees should not be "traditions enforcers." When a group is perceived to be violating certain traditions, it is doubtful the "error" is being done intentionally. More than likely, lack of knowledge or information is the reason. An outreach committee can share information about the traditions and make sure the group has copies of NA recovery and service material that explains the traditions. Even activities by a group that are obviously outside the bounds of our traditions are best handled by sharing information. It is never the function or purpose of outreach to give orders to a group or threaten removal from a meeting list or other forms of exclusion.

Workshops and Learning Days

Outreach committees may hold workshops and learning days for isolated groups. Members involved in service work in Narcotics Anonymous are honored to share their experiences with other addicts. Those who have participated in outreach workshops at the local level of service know the excitement that goes along with helping new members, groups, or area service committees flourish.

As new NA communities develop, there are certain common problems that tend arise through normal growing pains. Workshops give the fellowship the opportunity to share solutions, new ideas, and to solve problems. Members benefit when they have a chance to ask questions and receive differing opinions and ideas right on the spot, rather than relying solely on handbooks or waiting for replies by mail or telephone.

A workshop will generally last one to three hours, and focus on a specific aspect of service. Those presenting the workshops typically share their experience about the topic and allow time for a question and answer session near the end of the workshop. It is best to tailor workshops to the specific needs of the members expected to attend. Creativity is an asset in dealing with new groups and areas. What works for your home group may not work for others. Workshops can be conducted in a way that allows for brain-storming; solutions are guided by the steps, traditions, concepts for service, and other spiritual principles of Narcotics Anonymous. Sometimes situations may be presented that require more direction than available at the workshop. When this happens, requests can be made through the service structure for additional guidance.

Workshops are not the final word on service issues. On the contrary, they are only a beginning; a time for addicts to learn what their questions are, receive some solutions, and become more familiar with the rest of the NA service structure. Workshops can provide the basics needed for a solid foundation of experience, from which members can build their own service efforts. At workshops, members learn about the tools and the resources that are available. In much the same way that addicts learn the benefits of the steps by sharing them and practicing what they have learned, they start to understand the benefits of learning new information about service, and see how putting those ideas into practice in their local fellowship promotes increased growth.

A learning day is an opportunity for sharing experience about different aspects of service and/or recovery. However, it is of longer duration than a single workshop. In fact, a learning

day is usually made up of a series of workshops, each dealing with many different topics that cannot all be covered in the short time offered in a single workshop.

Learning days and workshops can work well even when members must travel a long distance to attend. Scheduling some fellowship time at the end of a learning day is of great benefit. A meal and a recovery meeting provide the means for NA members to connect and get to know each other on a more personal level. In such a relaxed atmosphere, experience not brought out in the formal sessions may surface.

Outreach Obstacles & Barriers

What can get in the way of doing outreach work? Cultural differences, language barriers, geographical distance, legal restrictions, and even lack of support from the local fellowship or a particular meeting. All too often, the obstacles encountered are the reasons for the isolation that the outreach effort is attempting to overcome. As addicts new to recovery may isolate themselves from other addicts because of perceived differences, new NA groups or communities can withdraw for similar reasons.

Sometimes the part of the fellowship that outreach is attempting to help will have been isolated for so long that many of their local members have an attitude of resistance to anything different and new. Perception of the outreach committee as "outsiders" may exist even though members of the isolated group are asking for assistance. It is hard to go forward with an outreach effort when we are afraid our efforts won't be welcomed, but if we approach the members in the spirit of help and sharing and maintain a positive attitude, we will eventually succeed in reaching the isolated group.

If there is a language barrier, try to bring at least one NA member who can speak the language fluently. While translations are an important part of carrying our message, language need not be an issue affecting a friendly visit. Often a simple request for language assistance will bring forth a volunteer in the group willing to translate or help explain things. It helps to be brief, and to keep any explanations simple. Avoid the use of slang and complex vocabulary. Focus explanations only on that information that will help the group with their specific problems at that time, and add more as the group is able to assimilate it. There's no need to give a crash course in NA recovery and service work in one sitting.

Legal restrictions can be a major obstacle when crossing national borders. It is a good idea to talk to others who have made the trip, to gain important insights regarding laws, level of enforcement, and local customs. When in doubt, contact customs or immigration officials for accurate information.

If the outreach commitment is being done for an isolated group inside an institution, then clearances and other arrangements are needed in advance. The local H&I committee should be contacted for assistance in ascertaining the particular needs of that group, and the best way to approach the facility. Additionally, consult the Institutional Group Guide for further information, and encourage those groups to get and use a copy.

Summary

Outreach attempts to end the isolation of groups and areas in order to help them survive and grow. Outreach service may be formalized through a committee structure, or done informally by interested members. Activities include: visiting isolated groups and ASCs; hosting workshops; providing basic service and meeting information; and sponsoring simple fellowship events such as campouts. Through the efforts of NA members doing outreach service, it is hoped that all parts of our fellowship can be connected for our mutual benefit in recovery and carrying the message to the addict who still suffers.

RESOURCE SECTION

The materials found in the resource section of the Outreach Booklet are compiled to serve as a possible starting point for your own outreach efforts. They may be used as is or modified to suit your individual needs. It is not mandatory you use any of the materials in this section. They are here simply as examples. As your outreach efforts continue to develop, this section may be expanded upon. You may wish to include your area/regional meeting lists, RSO/WSO catalogs, or possibly maps to area/regional service meetings. Placing this booklet in a 3-ring binder facilitates updates and additions.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

THE GROUP BOOKLET: This is the primary guidebook to starting and maintaining a Narcotics Anonymous group. It includes a sample NA meeting format along with sections that answer key questions such as:

- What is an NA group?
- Who can be a member?
- Where can we hold NA meetings?
- What kind of meeting format can we use?
- What kinds of literature should we use?
- What officers does a group need?
- What responsibilities does an NA group have?
- How can our group support other NA services?
- How can our group better serve our community?
- How can our group solve its problems?

Other Available Resources:

- *Hospitals & Institutions Handbook*
- *A Guide To Public Information*
- *A Guide To Local Service*
- *The Group (IP #2)*
- *The Loner: Staying Clean in isolation (I P #21)*
- *The Institutional Group Guide*

Literature may be obtained by contacting:

World Service Office, Inc.
PO Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA. 91409-9099
Tel: (818) 773-9999
Fax: (818) 700-0700
www.wsoinc.com



NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS NEW GROUP REGISTRATION FORM

If you are updating group information, please use the "Group Update Form."

Please complete all information & print clearly!


Group Name	Date
This group was formed (month/year)	This group holds meeting(s) per week
Area	Region

The following information is necessary for any communications with the group.

Group Contact	
Address	
City	State/Prov
Postal/Zip	Country
Phone: ()	

Group's Meeting Information

Please indicate (O for open) (C for closed) next to meeting days below

Meeting Days	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
Meeting Time							
Language(s)							
							
Average weekly attendance							

Meeting Location

Place	Room
Address	City
Borough/Sub-City	State/Prov
Postal/Zip	Country

If this meeting is held in a facility that has limited or restricted access, what are the requirements to enter?

"One of the most important things about our new way of life is being a part of a group of addicts seeking recovery. Our survival is directly related to the survival of the group and the Fellowship. To maintain unity within Narcotics Anonymous, it is imperative that the group remain stable, or the entire Fellowship perishes and the individual dies." Basic Text, page 59

GROUP VISITATION REPORT

NAME OF GROUP: _____

DAY OF MEETING: _____ TIME OF MEETING: _____

ADDRESS: _____

DIRECTIONS TO MEETING: _____

PURPOSE OF VISIT: _____

GROUPS RESPONSE TO OUTREACH VISIT: _____

DOES THE GROUP REQUEST OUTREACH ASSISTANCE? _____ YES _____ NO

IN WHAT AREA(S) DOES THE GROUP NEED HELP? _____

WHAT SERVICE POSITIONS ARE FILLED? _____ GSR _____ SECRETARY _____ TREASURER

GROUP CONTACT: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER: (____) _____ BEST TIME TO REACH: _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: _____

OUTREACH VOLUNTEER LIST

Name	Address	Phone	Do you need transportation?		Distance willing to travel
			Yes	No	
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					
13.					
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23.					

