

# SENANA

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South East Nebraska Area of Narcotics Anonymous

## Phone line Volunteer Guidelines

Updated August 2019



# Introduction

Phone line volunteers are NA members who receive calls from the Grasshopper phone system and upon answering are immediately then talking to caller on the line. The first NA member the caller speaks with will be a phone line volunteer. The response and attitude of a volunteer can have a lasting impression on the caller. This is a service position of great responsibility. This booklet is intended to help phone line volunteers to be better prepared to answer calls received on the help line.

When an individual that wants information about NA or wants to talk to a member of NA dials our number, the phone rings a pre-recorded and regularly updated message that greets the caller and instructs them to press 1 if they want to speak to an addict, press 2 if they want meeting list information, press 3 if they are a professional seeking more information about NA, press 4 if they want information about NA activities. If caller presses 1 to speak to an addict the message asks them to press 700 if they identify themselves as female and 701 if they identify as male. Once this selection is made the system begins dialing pre inputted numbers of volunteers until it reaches one that answers. Once you pick up the call you are talking with an addict.

It is recommended to keep this booklet, the PI contact list, and a current SENANA & NRSCNA meeting list near the phone where you are most likely to receive calls from the hotline. Keeping these items readily available when you are on-call is of the utmost importance.

The help line is a service provided by the South East Nebraska Area of Narcotics Anonymous (SENANA) Public Information committee. We would like to thank you for being a phone line volunteer and extend an invitation to you to attend our regularly scheduled PI committee meetings. We can always use new ideas and volunteers for this and other PI projects.

## Purpose of the Phone line

Our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. We do this by sharing our experience, strength, and hope. Although we are not counselors, we can relate. The best way to make ourselves available to those who need help is to provide a phone line service where someone can call and talk to another recovering addict. Being a phone line volunteer is an excellent way to strengthen our program, while practicing the Twelve Steps, by carrying the message.

# Do's and Don'ts of Phone line Service

## Do:

- 1) Take calls if at all possible
- 2) Say "Hello, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm an addict and a member of Narcotics Anonymous, how can I help you?  
NEVER identify yourself as anything but an ADDICT! Not as a member of any other recovery program. **PERIOD.** (i.e. NO alcoholic and an addict, NO church group affiliation, NO treatment or support group affiliation.)
- 3) Ask the caller where they are calling from, since our phone line covers all of Nebraska. Let them know that you may be able to help connect them with an addict closer to them if they want, but you are still able to talk to them. (This information is available on the Nebraska Regional Meeting lists.)
- 4) If returning a call, be certain that the person requesting help is on the line before identifying yourself as an Addict or mentioning NA.
- 5) Protect yours and all other NA member's anonymity at all times.
- 6) Have current NA meeting lists and NA literature handy to refer to.
- 7) Talk about yourself as it relates to recovery in NA – use "I" statements.
- 8) There may be times when you feel that it is necessary to meet with the caller. Meeting with the caller is a personal decision. When meeting with a caller, you must take someone with you and make sure that both of you are of the same sex as the caller.
- 9) Try to arrange a contact (of an NA member of the same sex as the caller) at their first NA meeting. If the caller would like a ride to a meeting and you are willing to take them, that's great, but remember to always have another Addict with you.
- 10) Present a clear NA message – talk about recovery in NA and use NA Language (i.e. "clean" or "recovering" not "sober" or "sobriety", etc.)
- 11) Contact the PI Committee Chairperson if any problems arise.

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## **Don't:**

- 1) Don't feel obligated to take a call if you are rushed or have an appointment.
- 2) Don't give out anyone's phone number, address or personal information (i.e. , seen them at a meeting, etc.) unless you have their permission.
- 3) Don't give advice or try to fix the caller.
- 4) Don't take responsibility for the caller, physically, financially or emotionally.
- 5) We strongly suggest that you don't take anyone home with you. If the caller is dangerously intoxicated or there is a fear of an overdose, detox or hospital emergency room are options you might like to suggest. We are fellow Addicts, not doctors. We are not qualified to deal with the physical problems of detoxifying anyone.
- 6) Don't give medical advice. Since we are not doctors we have no way of knowing who needs what medication. Suggest that the caller speak with their doctor regarding their concerns and their desire to discontinue use of their medications. If they are not comfortable talking to their doctor about this, suggest they seek a second doctor's opinion.
- 7) Don't feel you've failed if you never see the caller at a meeting.

We don't want to scare you off from being a phone line volunteer or making personal contact with a caller. We just want you to remember that you are just another recovering Addict in these situations; you may be the only NA some of these people ever see or hear.

## **How to Handle Special Calls**

### **Handling Crisis Calls:**

The NA Phone line is strictly for dispensing information about the NA fellowship, meetings and recovery. The volunteer must always remember that he/she is only a recovering addict sharing his/her experience, strength and hope. A phone line volunteer is not a professional crisis counselor, doctor, or psychologist, etc., and does not have the right to give professional advice. Calls which, in the volunteer's opinion, are beyond the boundaries of NA, should be quickly and politely diverted to the appropriate services available. Refer them to "Yellow Pages", or "Blue Pages" of the local phonebook to locate the services that can best help them. In extreme cases volunteer may feel there is need for immediate medical help in which case 911 can be called.

## **Detox and Rehabs:**

Callers requesting information about detoxification and/or rehabilitation should be told that the volunteer is not a professional, and not qualified to make specific referrals.

## **Calls From Friends and Family Members:**

Although NA phone lines are operated for the purpose of allowing Addicts the opportunity to discuss their desire to stop using, often calls are received from family members and friends of Addicts. When a family member or friend calls NA the volunteer must always inquire “Does the Addict Want help?” If the answer is no, it is dad, but the true fact is that there is nothing NA can do for such an Addict. The Addict must ask for help. This must be explained to the family or friend and they should be advised to make the NA phone line available to the Addict. The friend or family member should be treated with kindness and the utmost patience. They may be referred to a family oriented recovery program. Always explain that NA does not endorse or recommend any other organization or institution, and in no way is NA affiliated with any emergency service, agencies or programs.

Do not make referrals to specific drug/alcohol treatment facilities. Tell the caller to see the “Yellow Pages”, or “Blue Pages” of the local phonebook.

## **Contacting the Public Information Chairperson**

There may be times when you may want or need to talk to the PI Chairperson. Do so.

It is very important to inform the chairperson if your address or phone number changes, or in case of relapse.

All requests for speakers or when contacted by the media (television, radio, newspapers, etc.) must be referred to the chairperson as soon as possible.

Any time you experience problems receiving calls from hotline (such as being disconnected) or if you have suggestions on how the phone line could be improved, contact the chairperson. See the current contact list for the PI Chairpersons name and number.

