

Narcotics Anonymous World Services Bulletins

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NA World Service Board of Trustees
Bulletin #13

Some Thoughts Regarding Our Relationship to Alcoholics Anonymous

This article was generated by the World Service Board of Trustees in November 1985 in response to the needs of the fellowship. This bulletin was revised during the 1995-1996 conference year.

The question of just how Narcotics Anonymous relates to all other fellowships and organizations is one which may generate controversy within our fellowship. In spite of the fact that we have a stated policy of "cooperation, not affiliation" with outside organizations, confusion remains. One such sensitive issue involves our relationship to the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. Letters have been received by the World Service Board of Trustees asking a variety of questions about this relationship.

Narcotics Anonymous is modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous. Nearly every NA community in existence has leaned to some degree on AA in its formative stages. Our relationship with that fellowship over the years has been very real and dynamic. Our fellowship itself sprang from the turmoil within AA over what to do with the addicts knocking on its doors. We will look at our roots for some perspective on our current relationship to AA.

Bill W, one of AA's co-founders, often said that one of AA's greatest strengths is its single-minded focus on one thing and one thing only. By limiting its primary purpose to carrying the message to alcoholics, and avoiding all other activities, AA is able to do that one thing supremely well. The atmosphere of identification is preserved by that purity of focus, and alcoholics get help.

From very early on, AA was confronted by a perplexing problem: "What do we do with drug addicts? We want to keep our focus on alcohol so the alcoholic hears the message, but these addicts come in here talking about drugs, inadvertently weakening our atmosphere of identification." The steps were written, the Big Book was written—what were they supposed to do, rewrite it all? Allow the atmosphere of identification to get blurry so that no one got a clear sense of belonging? Kick these dying people back out into the streets? The problem must have been a tremendous one for them.

When they finally studied the problem carefully and took a stand in their literature, the solution they outlined possessed their characteristic common sense and wisdom. They pledged their support in a spirit of "cooperation, not affiliation." This farsighted solution to a difficult concern paved the way for the development of the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship.

But still, the problem that they wished to avoid would have to be addressed by any group that tried to adapt AA's program of recovery to drug addicts. How do you achieve the atmosphere of identification so necessary for surrender and recovery if you let all different kinds of addicts in? Can someone with a heroin problem relate to someone with an alcohol or marijuana or Valium problem? How will you ever achieve the unity that the First Tradition says is necessary for recovery? Our fellowship inherited a tough dilemma.

For some perspective on how we handled that dilemma, one more look at AA history is helpful. Another thing Bill W. frequently wrote and spoke about was what he called the "tenstrike" of AA—the wording of the Third and Eleventh Steps. The whole area of spirituality versus religion was as perplexing for them as unity was for us. Bill liked to recount that the simple addition of the words "as we understood Him" after the word "God" killed that controversy in one chop. An issue that had the potential to divide and destroy AA was converted into the cornerstone of the program by that simple turn of phrase.

As the founders of Narcotics Anonymous adapted our steps, they came up with a "tenstrike" of perhaps equal importance. Rather than converting the First Step in a natural, logical way ("we admitted that we were powerless over drugs..."), they made a radical change in that step. They wrote, "We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction..." Drugs are a varied group of substances, the use of any of which is but a symptom of our disease. When addicts gather and focus on drugs, they are usually focusing on their differences, because each of us used a different drug or combination of drugs. The one thing that we all share is the disease of addiction. With that single turn of a phrase, the foundation of the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship was laid.

Our First Step gives us one focus: our addiction. The wording of Step One also takes the focus of our powerlessness off the symptom and places it on the disease itself. The phrase "powerless over a drug" does not go far enough for most of us in recovery—the desire to use has been removed—but "powerless over our addiction" is as relevant to the oldtimer as it is to the newcomer. Our addiction begins to resurface and cause unmanageability in our thoughts and feelings whenever we become complacent in our program of recovery. This process has nothing to do with "drug of choice." We guard against the recurrence of our drug use by applying our spiritual principles, before a relapse. Our First Step applies regardless of drug of choice and length of clean time. With this "tenstrike" as its foundation, NA has begun to flourish as a major worldwide organization, clearly focusing on addiction.

As any NA community matures in its understanding of its own principles (particularly Step One), an interesting fact emerges; The AA perspective, with its alcohol-oriented language, and the NA approach, with its clear need to shift the focus away from specific drugs, don't mix well. When we try to mix them, we find that we have the same problem as AA had with us all along! When our members identify as "addicts and alcoholics" or talk about "sobriety" and living "clean and sober," the clarity of the NA message is blurred. The implication in this language is that there are two diseases, that one drug is separate from another, so a separate set of terms is needed when discussing addiction. At first glance this seems minor, but our experience clearly shows that the full impact of the NA message is crippled by this subtle semantic confusion.

It has become clear that our common identification, our unity, and our full surrender as addicts, depends on a clear understanding of our most fundamental principles: We are powerless over a disease that gets progressively worse when we use any drug. It does not matter what drug was at the center for us when we arrived. Any drug we use will release our disease all over again. We recover from the disease of addiction by applying our Twelve Steps. Our steps are uniquely worded to carry this message clearly, so the rest of our language of recovery must be consistent with our steps. We cannot mix these fundamental principles with those of our parent fellowship without crippling our own message.

Both fellowships have a Sixth Tradition for a reason: to keep each one from being diverted from its own primary purpose. Because of the inherent need of a Twelve Step fellowship to focus on

one thing and one thing only, so that it can do that one thing supremely well, each Twelve Step fellowship must stand alone, unaffiliated with everything else. It is in our nature to be separate, to feel separate, and use a separate set of recovery terms, because we each have a separate, unique primary purpose. The focus of AA is on the alcoholic, and we ought to respect that fellowship's perfect right to adhere to its own traditions and protect its focus. If we cannot use language consistent with that, we ought not go to their meetings and undermine that atmosphere. In the same way, we NA members ought to respect our own primary purpose and identify ourselves at NA meetings **simply as addicts**, and share in a way that keeps our message clear.

A casual, cursory glance at AA's success in delivering recovery to alcoholics over the years makes it abundantly clear that theirs is a successful program. Their literature, their service structure, the quality of their members' recovery, their sheer numbers, the respect they enjoy from society—these things speak for themselves. Our members ought not embarrass us by adopting a "we're better than them" posture. That can only be counterproductive.

As a fellowship, we must continue to strive to move forward by not stubbornly clinging to one radical extreme or the other. Our members who have been unintentionally blurring the NA message by using drug-specific language such as "sobriety," "alcoholic," "clean and sober," "**dope fiend**," etc., could help by identifying simply and clearly as addicts, and using the words "clean," "clean time," and "recovery," which imply no particular substance. We all could help by referring to only our own literature at meetings, thereby avoiding any implied endorsement or affiliation. Our principles stand on their own. For the sake of our development as a fellowship and the personal recovery of our members, our approach to the problem of addiction must shine through clearly in what we say and do at meetings.

Our members who have used these arguments to rationalize an anti-AA stand, thereby alienating many sorely needed stable members, would do well to re-evaluate and reconsider the effects of that kind of behavior. Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual fellowship. Love, tolerance, patience, and cooperation are essential if we are to live our principles.

Let's devote our energies to our personal spiritual development through our own Twelve Steps. Let's carry our own message clearly. There's a lot of work to be done, and we need each other if we are to be effective. Let's move forward in a spirit of NA unity.

(Reprinted from Newsline Vol. 2, No. 6.)

**NA World Service Board of Trustees
Bulletin #14**

**The Relationship of Narcotics Anonymous to NarAnon
and Families Anonymous**

This article was generated by the World Service Board of Trustees in August 1987 in response to the needs of the fellowship. It was revised during the 1995-1996 conference year.

The World Service Board of Trustees has received many inquiries during the past few years which have asked specific questions about how to cooperate, but not affiliate, with NarAnon and Families Anonymous. The need to address this issue arose from a confusion between the letter of our Twelve Traditions, and the spirit of love, understanding, and caring that we all feel as individuals toward these fellowships.

We believe that we have to expand the discussion of the issue and not settle for a simplistic response such as “cooperation, not affiliation.” The fellowship has asked for clear guidance.

Adherence to our Twelve Traditions does not negate feelings of respect for other fellowships and organizations. We must remember, however, that Narcotics Anonymous, NarAnon, and Families Anonymous are separate fellowships, each with their own purpose. These organizations are not enmeshed with each other, nor are they interdependent.

We believe that by reflecting back upon our own experiences, we may recall that our family members and loved ones were often instrumental in allowing us to face the consequences of our addiction by not helping us! We now have the opportunity to support them by not interfering. We simply pursue our own purpose, as guided by the spiritual principles of Narcotics Anonymous, and remain true to our primary purpose and the guidance provided by our Twelve Traditions. Consistent fellowship action, guided by these principles, is the kindest and most loving path for us to follow, both for ourselves and our family members and loved ones.

The World Service Board of Trustees believes that our policy of cooperation not affiliation guides our fellowship well. Traditions Six and Ten tell us that we neither endorse nor oppose any other organization’s philosophy or purpose. We do not make any financial arrangements with, enter into any reciprocal agreements with, or lend our name to any other fellowship or organization.

Our relationship as a fellowship with NarAnon and Families Anonymous—as with treatment centers, clubhouses, or any other organization or enterprise—is simply and clearly defined as one of providing information. We provide information about NA’s primary purpose, meeting locations and format, upcoming conventions and activities, etc., to anyone who inquires.

Over the years there have been occasions when some of the practices engaged in by our fellowship, as well intentioned as they have been, have run counter to our traditions. Our traditions advise us to refrain from listing either Families Anonymous or NarAnon meetings in any of NA’s published material, such as directories, flyers, or other pieces. We do not obtain

meeting places for these other fellowships at NA activities, nor do we utilize speakers from the organizations. However in the spirit of love and cooperation, we do encourage our members, including phonline volunteers, to use common sense and good judgment in making known to family members that NA is a fellowship for drug addicts who seek recovery from active addiction. We can also advise them that there are other fellowships such as Families Anonymous and NarAnon which may help them in seeking their own solutions and understanding.

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NA World Service Board of Trustees
Bulletin #15

Open And Closed NA Meetings

This article was generated by the World Service Board of Trustees in August 1987 in response to the needs of the fellowship. This bulletin was revised during the 1995-1996 conference year.

Our purpose in addressing open and closed NA meetings is to help NA members understand precisely what NA meetings can offer to both addicts and non-addicts. There are different types of NA meetings which serve different purposes. Communication from the fellowship has revealed the need to understand what role the different types play in carrying our message.

The population at large is gaining an increased awareness of our fellowship, and has an increased interest in our meetings. The board of trustees has received reports of confusion arising when interested non-addicts or people who are not sure if they are addicts attend NA meetings. This confusion can be magnified when these individuals participate in our meetings.

Our message of recovery in meetings can be clouded or diluted when people such as parents, spouses, therapists, members of other fellowships, or others who are not NA members share or speak at NA meetings.

We always encourage respect, tact, and diplomacy when confronted with circumstances where non-addicts attend regular NA meetings. Most of these occasions do not present continuing problems for our groups. However, with continued growth and increased awareness about NA, all of us must look ahead. It is our belief that, by gaining clarity about open and closed NA meetings, our members can be prepared to carry the message of recovery from drug addiction to addicts, as well as sharing our message to others who are interested.

The World Service Board of Trustees recommends the following guidelines and definitions:

1. A Narcotics Anonymous meeting, whether it is open or closed, is a refuge for addicts. It is intended to be a safe and beneficial place where an addict can hear about and participate in recovery from the disease of drug addiction. As much as we might like to, we cannot be all things to all people.
2. A closed meeting in Narcotics Anonymous is for those individuals who identify themselves as addicts or for those who are uncertain and think they might have a drug problem. A closed Narcotics Anonymous meeting provides a freedom that is necessary for more personal and intimate sharing by Narcotics Anonymous members. It does so by providing an atmosphere in which addicts can feel more certain that those attending will be able to identify with them, and share their own experience, strength, and hope.
3. An open meeting is an NA meeting that may be attended by anyone (e.g., judges, probation officers, professionals, family members) interested in how we have found recovery from the disease of addiction. Verbal participation, however, is limited to NA members only. An open meeting in Narcotics Anonymous allows people from outside of the fellowship to observe what Narcotics Anonymous is and how it functions. This can be very helpful to

those individuals who are striving to reach a decision regarding their personal status as an addict. An open meeting in Narcotics Anonymous is one method our groups use to achieve their primary purpose of carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. Some groups also have open meetings as a way of allowing non-addict friends and relatives of NA members to celebrate recovery anniversaries with them.

4. Our service structure provides an avenue for non-addict participation in Narcotics Anonymous. In addition to recognizing the need for and value of non-addict trustees (*Temporary Working Guide to the Service Structure*) and non-addict special workers (Tradition Eight), the fellowship has approved material (*A Guide to Public Information*) which provides for public information community meetings. These meetings are the vehicle for service committee efforts which are aimed at communicating information about our fellowship to the general public. These are not regular NA meetings, and they are the preferred approach to informing the general public about Narcotics Anonymous. This approach avoids confusion, presents no threat to anonymity, does not affect the NA message in regular meetings, and allows us to continue our recovery and service while at the same time meeting the needs of non-addicts who are interested in NA.

(Reprinted from The NA Way Magazine, December 1987.)

NA World Service Board of Trustees
Bulletin #17

What Is Addiction?

At the 1988 World Service Conference, the following motion was passed: To request WSB to take on as a project the task of defining "addiction" as it relates to NA. The stated intent was to define addiction as drug addiction, and to clarify whether or not the word "drugs," as we use it, includes caffeine, nicotine and sugar. What follows is an essay developed during the 1988-89 conference year by the World Service Board of Trustees in response to that request.

The task of defining addiction has challenged physicians, judges, clergy, addicts, their families and the general public throughout history. There are as many potential definitions as there are groups with an interest in defining addiction. Some definitions would emphasize physiological dependence, some psychological dependence; some would focus on family dynamics, some on behavioral problems, and still others on morality. This list could be expanded at length, and NA could come up with its own definition and add it to the list. Fortunately, Tradition Ten steers us away from such public debates. Clearly, debating such issues is not NA's task. Our task is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

Still, defining addiction for ourselves is certainly important to the process of recovery. After all, in our First Step we admit powerlessness over it. That admission is the foundation upon which our recovery is built. So the question, "What is addiction?" is relevant indeed; the fellowship has a responsibility to consider it carefully.

It can be answered, at least in part, and we will attempt to do that here. But there is much about this question that we will not be able to answer in concrete terms. In those cases we will try to explain our position, and state why the issue does not lend itself to a clear definition.

This discussion will not include a restatement of our fellowship's broadest understanding of what addiction is. That may be found in the Basic Text, especially in the chapter "Who is an Addict?" Instead we will focus on a few difficult issues that the World Service Board of Trustees has been asked to consider.

Is addiction a disease?

In many ways this is one of those questions about addiction that defies an answer. There is a vigorous public debate over the question of whether or not addiction is a disease. As we grow and find ourselves more squarely in the public eye, we must learn to measure our written statements carefully, and not take dogmatic stands we are not in the position to back up.

On the other hand, we are certainly not arguing here that NA literature should quit referring to addiction as a disease. It is our fellowship's collective experience and understanding that addiction is in fact a disease. We have no reason to challenge that perception now. It has served us well.

Our experience with addiction is this: When we accept that it is a disease over which we are powerless, such surrender provides a basis for recovery through the Twelve Steps. The numbers of NA members living in freedom from active addiction bear our position out pretty well.

So even though we as a fellowship are not in a position to argue what is or is not a disease in the strictest medical sense, we are fully confident that our use of the word "disease" in describing our condition is appropriate. Whether it is appropriate in a medical sense or in a metaphorical sense is not important. We'll leave that debate to others. It is only important for us that we realize we are powerless over our addiction, and that in Narcotics Anonymous we have the tools to treat it effectively.

And really, that's the key point: Professional people in fields like medicine, religion, psychiatry, law and law enforcement define addiction in terms that are appropriate to their areas of concern. So do we. **Narcotics Anonymous defines addiction for the purpose of providing recovery from it.** We treat addiction as a disease, because that makes sense to us and it works. We have no need to press the issue any farther than that.

Does "addiction" mean only drug addiction? What about other kinds of addiction?

It must be stated clearly that by the word "addiction" we do in fact mean "drug addiction." Our Third Tradition says, "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using." Clearly we mean "...a desire to stop using drugs."

As a fellowship we place much importance on the fact that we have shifted the focus of our steps off any specific drug and onto the addiction itself. We have done that by wording Step One "powerless over our addiction" rather than "powerless over drugs" or "powerless over narcotics." It is clear to most of us that any wording of Step One which named specific drugs--or drugs at all, for that matter--would have stated the principle with much less power for our purposes than our current wording does.

If we would attempt to broaden our focus beyond drug addiction to include other types of addiction, we believe we would seriously undermine our atmosphere of identification. The balance we are striving for is a delicate one. On the one hand we must understand our First Step well enough to keep our sharing at meetings focused on the disease of addiction, not on specific drugs. That way our focus is broad enough to include all drug addicts. That's why we have tried to agree on terms that adequately describe our disease and our recovery and yet are not drug-specific. On the other hand we must keep our focus specific enough to provide clear identification for our new members.

What about caffeine, nicotine, and sugar?

NA is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. We state this clearly and unequivocally in our meetings and throughout our literature. At most of those meetings, however, coffee and cookies are served and members are smoking cigarettes. Caffeine and nicotine are being used. Some believe that sugar is a mood-altering drug. To many, this represents a grey area in our program. Some consider it a kind of hypocrisy.

To be quite frank, this problem does indeed represent a kind of grey area. It calls upon us again to rise to a higher level in our thinking about our program, not falling back on simplistic black-

or-white dogmatic arguments. There is no black or white here. If there were, we would either say that caffeine, nicotine and sugar are not mood- or mind-altering (a claim we would be hard pressed to back up) or that some mood- or mind-altering drugs are okay for us to use. Neither of those statements is acceptable for us to make.

This issue challenges each of us to use common sense rather than expecting the ultimate answer from the World Service Board of Trustees. We have no single statement which is adequate to address this perplexing issue, but we do have years of experience to draw from.

Since our inception as a fellowship, many of our members have been smoking cigarettes, drinking coffee and eating sugar. Of these members, those who work the steps and abide by the traditions recover. This cannot be said of members who, for example, smoke marijuana or drink alcohol or abuse prescription drugs.

So we as a fellowship do not address the issue of our members' use of caffeine, nicotine or sugar in any way. We leave those decisions to each individual member to work out. Our disease finds many avenues in which to express itself in ongoing recovery. These can be identified by working the steps, facing ourselves honestly, opening up completely with a sponsor, and relying on a Higher Power for the strength we lack. Whenever anything is producing unhappiness or dissatisfaction in our lives, we should use the Twelve Steps to address it.

AFTERWORD

This essay is intended to stimulate members' thinking and discussion about the nature of addiction. As members awaken spiritually and share with one another, the answers get woven into the fabric of the fellowship's conventional wisdom. Then just when our thinking begins to harden into dogma, another generation comes along to challenge us and keep our perspective fresh. Clear, simple truth withstands such tests.

We urge NA members to remain open-minded and flexible. It is important to look to our literature and our experienced members for guidance, but ultimately each member has the right to understand and apply this program in the way that works best for them.

NA World Service Board of Trustees
Bulletin #18

Special Interest Meetings

The following is a synopsis of a report that was delivered to the World Service Conference at its annual meeting in April 1989 by the WSC Ad Hoc Committee on Special Interest Meetings. Formed the previous year, the committee was chaired by the vice chairperson of the World Service Board of Trustees. This bulletin was revised during the 1995-96 conference year.

The WSC Ad Hoc Committee on Special Interest Meetings was formed by vote of the 1988 World Service Conference. The intent of this motion, as stated in the WSC minutes, was to help us as a fellowship come to grips with and perhaps find a solution to the issue of special interest meetings. In addition, this committee could provide some forum for the input of ideas about the issue.

Purpose of the Committee

The committee spent a great deal of its initial meeting discussing what the conference wanted it to accomplish. As a result of the discussion, the committee set the following goals:

1. To provide a definition of special interest meetings;
2. To investigate precisely what role special interest meetings play in the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship;
3. To allow the fellowship an opportunity to comment on this issue by means of conducting open forums; requesting input directly from groups and members via the Newline, the Fellowship Report, and The NA Way Magazine; and by direct mailings to regions; and,
4. To provide a report which could be used by NA members as a basis for the discussion of the issue of special interest meetings.

Definition of Special Interest Groups

At the beginning of its deliberations, the committee attempted to define what, precisely, a special interest meeting is and how that definition fits into existing NA guidelines on the subject. We were informed in this part of our task by both the Temporary Working Guide to Our Service Structure and the Basic Text.

The Temporary Working Guide told us that "an NA group is any meeting which meets regularly at a specified place and time, providing that it follows the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions," and that the "primary purpose of an NA group is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers by providing a setting for identification and a healthy atmosphere for recovery." (*Temporary Working Guide*, 1988 Edition, pages 1 & 2.)

The Basic Text provided more clarity in its discussion of Tradition Four, stating that "There are two basic types of meetings; those open to the general public and those closed to the public (for addicts only). Meeting formats vary widely from group to group; some are participation meetings, some speakers, some are question and answer, and some focus on special problems discussion." (Basic Text, Fifth Edition, page 63.)

In some NA communities there are groups consisting of men, women, gays, professionals, etc. These members host NA meetings where the focus is on recovery from drug addiction in Narcotics Anonymous.

Types of Special Interest Meeting

The Ad Hoc Committee on Special Interest Groups wrote to each RSC chairperson and RSR requesting information concerning special interest meetings in their regions. Of the fifty-eight NA regions, twenty-four responded to this request. Here are the results of our survey:

- Of the twenty-four regions responding, twenty indicated that special interest meetings were held in their regions.
- The twenty regions have reported a total of 184 special interest meetings. Some regions, however, reported that not all areas responded to their request for information and that their data was therefore incomplete.
- The regions reported a variety of types of special interest meetings. These types include: Men's, Women's, Gay and Lesbian, Young People/Youth meetings, Couples meetings, one Agnostic meeting, one Illness and Recovery meeting, and one "Pills" meeting. It was also reported to the committee from other sources that in some regions there are meetings for Vietnam Veterans, people with AIDS, people who are HIV positive, and various types of professionals.
- Of the regions that reported how long special interest meetings had been in existence within their boundaries, a number indicated that meetings had been occurring for over five years, and one region reported a group soon to celebrate its tenth anniversary.
- Although the committee was informed that some areas have a policy of excluding special interest meetings from their meeting schedules, no region reported written area or regional policies on this subject.

Final Observations

The Ad Hoc Committee on Special Interest Meetings understood almost from its beginning that resolving the issue of special interest meetings in Narcotics Anonymous might be impossible, that the varying opinions on the subject seemed to be irreconcilable, and that we might not be able to offer a perspective that would be so fresh and profound that the entire membership of NA would immediately accept our conclusions. We did, however, feel that if we were able to make some objective observations on the subject—devoid of passion and emotionalism—we might be able to perform a service. Here then are our conclusions:

Special Interest meetings have existed in Narcotics Anonymous for some time. There does not appear to be anything in the Twelve Traditions which cautions groups against holding special interest meetings, provided that the group has no requirement for membership other than the desire to stop using. Special interest meetings tend to survive and flourish in local NA communities where there is a need and desire for such meetings and do not exist in NA communities where there is no need nor desire.

In Narcotics Anonymous, the World Service Conference does not have the authority to dictate policy to groups, and regional and area service committees do not have policy-making authority over the decisions of their groups. The only authority present in the groups is a loving God expressed in a group's conscience.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Special Interest Meetings concluded that special interest meetings must be appropriate in some NA communities since they exist and flourish with little controversy in these communities. In NA communities where special interest meetings do not exist, and where the need for them is not apparent, there is no reason to create them.

The findings in the report remain true for Narcotics Anonymous today. In some areas, special interest meetings have expanded formats and topics while other areas continue to have no perceived need for these meetings. Groups, exercising their autonomy, are best suited to decide whether there is any necessity to have special interest meetings.

NA World Service Board of Trustees
Bulletin #19

Gender-specific Language And Use of The Word "God" in NA Literature

The following is a February 1992 response to a motion committed to the World Service Board of Trustees by the World Service Conference. It reflects the views of the board at the time of writing.

During WSC '91, the following motion was committed to the World Service Board of Trustees for its consideration: That all subsequent literature that is to be revised and be produced to have non-gender-specific language and that all references to God be changed to "*Higher Power*" or "*Power Greater than ourselves.*"

This motion was addressed at our June 1991, August 1991, and February 1992 meetings, with our discussions focusing on the following main issues.

First, and simplest, is the change to non-gender-specific language. Our perception is that the various committees involved in literature projects are already very sensitive to this issue. Changes of the type suggested by this motion are already being considered in the literature development and review process.

More complicated is the question of changing all references to "God." Our fellowship embraces the devoutly religious as well as the atheist. We experience a profound spiritual awakening as a result of actively applying the Twelve Steps in our lives. Most of us continue to experience change and growth in our spiritual orientation as we continue to live the program. We are faced with the dilemma of meaningfully addressing diverse and evolving personal spiritual orientations. This motion proposes replacing all references to God with the terms "Higher Power" or "Power Greater than ourselves." These substitutions would not resolve our dilemma since they still would not meet the needs of many members, particularly those who believe that the "Power greater than ourselves" in the Second Step is not equivalent to the "God, as we understood Him" in our Third Step. There have been numerous other alternatives suggested to the term "God." We feel that, prior to making a change which could profoundly impact our philosophy and interpretation of principles, significant discussion and agreement need to take place within the fellowship at large.

Both of these questions carry with them an additional consideration, since the word "God" and gender-specific language are used in our steps and traditions. We feel that any changes to our steps and traditions should not be considered in the same way we consider narrative portions of our literature. Once again, we feel that such changes and the possible ramifications of such changes need to have significant discussion and agreement prior to any implementation.

As a result of our discussions, it is the opinion of the World Service Board of Trustees that no formal action should be taken on this motion at this time. We do, however, believe that these topics should be widely discussed throughout the fellowship. We thank the conference for allowing us to serve.

NA World Service Board of Trustees
Bulletin #20

**Freedom From Prejudice,
Parts 1 & 2**

The following is not a policy statement from the World Service Board of Trustees. Written in 1991, it is intended merely to stimulate thought and discussion on the topic of prejudice and how it affects Narcotics Anonymous.

WSB External Affairs Committee

"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using," isn't it? That's what our Third Tradition says. But in some NA groups, it almost seems as if a few more membership requirements have been added. Though it may not be said aloud, the impression you get from such groups is this: "You've got to come from same racial, or ethnic, or social, or economic, or educational, or sexual background as we do in order to be accepted here. It's not enough, just to have a desire to stop using."

In July, the World Service Conference held a workshop in Arlington, Virginia. One panel focused a portion of its discussion on the subject of prejudice in Narcotics Anonymous. Participants felt the discussion was long overdue, and that we as a fellowship should begin to further explore ways to "raise our consciousness" and, thus, to begin changing our attitudes and behavior. The purpose of this article is to begin raising our awareness of how we treat one another so that, ultimately, any addict seeking recovery, "regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion," may find what they seek among us.

Awareness

We can't begin to change unless we're aware there is a need for change. As addicts, we reflect the society we come from. We bring our racism, classism, sexism, and all our other prejudices with us into recovery. We accept unacceptable behavior, in ourselves and in each other, because "that's the way it's always been." We all suffer, to greater or lesser extents, from this kind of thinking; it's the way of the world we've been raised in.

What can we do? Well, to deny our bigotry only allows us to continue in old thinking and behavior. But when we admit we discriminate, we can begin to address that thinking and behavior with the tools of recovery.

In NA, we're told to "show up and tell the truth." When addicts hear other addicts share their pain and their fears, something wonderful happens. Open discussions in our meetings can be very important in helping us see how prejudice affects our ability to recover, and our ability to carry the message to others. Choosing "Freedom from Prejudice" as a discussion meeting topic, for example, can open the lid on the defects we try to hide from one another, and sometimes even from ourselves.

Sponsorship is another tool to be put to work. What would occur if we all took a mini-inventory of ourselves, an inventory focused on prejudice, its affect on our lives, and its impact on the life

of our fellowship? And what would happen if every NA member talked with their sponsor about their fears of people from other backgrounds or lifestyles? Whenever we work the steps with open minds and hearts, healing begins to take place.

Into Action

When we can accept that we are indeed bigoted, without making any excuses, then we're ready to take action. The miracle begins when we accept that, as individuals and as a fellowship, we frequently fall short of our own principles. Yes, this is who we are today--and yes, today, we need to change. Acceptance here does not mean, "Well, that's just the way things are." Acceptance means taking responsibility for ourselves, and seeking the courage to change.

At the Arlington workshop, individual members shared about their own experiences of prejudice--not only ways in which they had felt its cruel sting, but ways in which they had inflicted that sting on others. People talked about not being hugged because they were black; being shunned because of their use of essential, prescribed medication; avoiding members who have disabilities; being fearful of people from different educational levels; avoiding anyone with different sexual preference from their own. Some of these things hampered their own recovery; some hampered their role in supporting the recovery of others; all of it made them hurt. They admitted it, and they asked all of us, as a fellowship, to help them change.

Yes, it's true: we come from a prejudiced society. That does not mean, however, that we must remain forever bound by prejudice. The NA program offers freedom, not only from drug addiction, but from the insidious defects of character that keep us from living full, healthy, happy lives. By working the steps, we can rise above our shortcomings. In doing so, we can set an example for one another, and for others in our communities, of what spiritual recovery is about.

How can you "show up and tell the truth" about prejudice in NA? You can:

1. Raise the topic at a discussion meeting.
2. Contact your regional convention committee, and ask them to hold a workshop on prejudice at the next convention.
3. Ask your area and regional service committees to consider whether prejudice affects any of their services.
4. Talk with your sponsor about how prejudice--yours and others--affects you and your recovery. Talk with those you sponsor, too.
5. If your group conducts an annual inventory, ask that "prejudice" be one of the subjects they examine.

Prejudice in NA hurts the whole fellowship, from the oldest oldtimer to the newest newcomer. We, as members of a fellowship based on spiritual principles, can not and must not settle for anything less than freedom from prejudice.

Freedom From Prejudice, Part Two

While we may not have adequate time at this year's conference meeting [1992] to do more than allow for open discussion on this and other issues, the board of trustees hopes these points will stimulate dialogue and that discussions will continue throughout the year at fellowship forums. As a board, we are committed to furthering these discussions to help us, as a fellowship, find solutions. Following are the proposed discussion points:

How can the conference and its participants effectively address the issue of prejudice within our fellowship and set a course toward freedom from prejudice?

Discuss the challenges facing a spiritual fellowship that exists within cultures and societies heavily weighted with prejudice.

As NA members, as sponsors, as members of home groups, as leaders in the conference, what can each of us do to contribute to the fulfillment of the words from our White Booklet, "Anyone may join us, regardless of age, race, sexual identify, creed, religion or lack of religion."

Unity, not uniformity, is vital to the growth of NA. As we recover, we emerge as beautiful, distinct, unique children of God. As a conference, how can we set the example by nurturing unity while encouraging the magnificent diversity manifest in Narcotics Anonymous worldwide?

How do we greet newcomers who may not meet "the image" we have of an addict in our particular NA community? We will not have to cultivate our "tolerance" if we can learn to apply the principles of acceptance, love, and compassion first.

What about PI and H&I efforts? Are our communities working to reach all kinds of addicts from all walks of life? Who isn't here?

How do we, as a fellowship and as individuals, deal with the inherent prejudices within our fellowship and within our own hearts?

Specifically, we need to encourage discussion of prejudice within NA as it has affected and is affecting the following: gay & lesbian addicts, Hispanic addicts, Asian addicts, women addicts, "older" addicts, black addicts, handicapped addicts, overweight addicts, addict professionals, language differences, religious differences, atheist/agnostic addicts, "anyone-different-from-us."

This is only a beginning, but it all starts with a first step, doesn't it?

NA World Services
Bulletin #21R

The Generation of Funds (Fundraising) And The Seventh Tradition In NA

This article was generated in December 1991 and revised in 2002 in response to the needs of the fellowship. It represents the views at the time of its writing.

Questions about fundraising and how fundraising relates to the traditions, especially Tradition Seven ("Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.") have been asked on numerous occasions in the past few years. As groups, areas, and regions grow, the perceived need for finances to help fulfill the Fifth Tradition ("Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.") may also grow. When the cost of ancillary services--such as helplines, meeting lists, and literature for use in H&I meetings, among others--is considered, many groups, areas, and regions find themselves in the position of needing or wanting more funds than are provided by members' donations to the "basket" at the group level. It is at these times that questions arise as to how to fund the services that help carry our message to the still-suffering addict. This article will attempt to answer some of these questions as well as offer some simple guidelines about raising funds. We will try to provide a brief historical perspective on fundraising in NA, look at some of the problems that may result from various efforts, and strive to show the relationship of Tradition Seven to this issue.

In looking at this topic, it is helpful to understand how fundraising started in our fellowship. Many early groups held a variety of activities such as dinners, picnics, and other social events to promote recovery, unity, and a sense of belonging. While these activities were not specifically intended to raise funds, a number of them turned out to be financially successful, allowing the host group to purchase additional literature or other supplies for their meetings. As the fellowship grew and the need or want for additional services became greater, the purpose of some of these activities changed; instead of celebrating recovery, they were designed to raise funds.

As the fellowship continued to grow and more area and regional service committees were formed, the focus continued to change--in some instances, to make up for the perceived lack of funds being donated from the groups' Seventh Tradition collections. As time went on, more and more service committees began relying on this form of funding, reaching the point, at times, where the success or failure of an event such as a convention determined the area or region's ability to provide services and participate in the fund-flow. In other instances, groups, areas, and regions had such success with their social events that they began to put an extraordinary amount of time and effort into these activities, becoming invested in having a "successful" convention, dance, or campout.

A considerable number of problems arose from such practices. The accountability of service committees to their groups was affected as the committees began to rely upon these events instead of on contributions from the groups' Seventh Tradition collections for their funding. In some cases, the various service bodies began to get diverted from their original purpose by "money, property, and prestige." Some groups and service committees began to amass huge

"prudent reserves," in some cases amounting to many thousands of dollars. For some groups and committees, this "prudent reserve" grew so large that the body holding it did not have to rely upon contributions for upwards of six months or more, despite the fact that in various fellowship service publications the recommended amount for a prudent reserve is one month's expenses. Merchandising efforts became a "business" in some cases, leading us away from the spiritual focus of our program. It became harder and harder to insure that donations to our fellowship came only from our members at various social events. And some members began to raise concerns that we could be perceived by those outside our program as a fellowship that is more involved with social functions and merchandising efforts than with helping addicts recover from the disease of addiction. As these problems became apparent, members began to share their concerns and started questioning the need for such practices. Some of the questions focused on the relationship between Tradition Seven and fundraising.

While this tradition specifically talks about self-support--declining donations from outside sources--some of the principles underlying the tradition, such as simplicity and faith, may prove to be of assistance in answering questions about funding our services. Our experience has shown that, as recovering addicts, all of our needs add up to the need for ongoing freedom from active addiction. To attain this freedom, we need the principles contained in the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions of NA, recovery meetings where we can share our experience, strength, and hope, and other recovering addicts to help us apply these spiritual principles in our lives. These three things are simple; they do not require us to obtain college degrees or expend vast sums of money.

In our active addiction, most of us seemed to have one thing in common: self-centeredness. As we begin the recovery process, we learn that we "keep what we have by giving it away." We start to learn the value of being a contributing member of our fellowship and of society as a whole. We begin to learn the simple truth that if we want to keep attending NA meetings and help carry the message, we need to contribute our fair share financially as well as with our time and energy. Self-support, within the context of Tradition Seven, goes far beyond mere financial support. Along the way, we learn that contributing our fair share is one way in which we can express our gratitude for what has been freely given to us. Over time, we develop faith that as long as we are doing what we're supposed to--practicing the principles of our program--the God of our understanding will take care of us and show us a new way to live.

When looking at the needs of the group, simplicity once again comes to mind. Our needs are simple: a place where we can hold our meetings, literature to help carry our message, and, in most cases, simple refreshments. We do not need spacious, luxurious meeting facilities, excessive quantities of literature, or refreshments of every type to attract addicts to our meetings. The simplicity of our message and the effectiveness of our program are sufficient. We do not need large financial reserves if we have faith that the God of our understanding will take care of our needs. Our experience has shown that when a group's financial needs are not met, and that fact is communicated to the members, those needs are generally taken care of. The simplicity of our needs is reinforced by the simplicity of our primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Our experience has shown that we must carry out this simple task to the very best of our ability, for it is the very essence of who we are and what we do in NA. We have discovered that if everything we do is done to fulfill that purpose, generally, we will find the funds necessary to do what we must.

Many groups and service committees have decided to avoid controversy by simply seeking to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. In this manner, they rely solely on attracting new members to their groups by striving to strengthen their personal recovery, working and living NA's Twelve Steps. As new members are attracted, groups grow, Seventh Tradition collections increase, and more money is available for group needs. Accordingly, funds are donated to the area, the region, and world services. (For further information on this topic, please refer to IP No. 25 Self Support: Principle and Practice.) As services are funded more efficiently, the NA message of recovery is carried farther and better than ever before. The result is that more addicts seek recovery through Narcotics Anonymous and more NA meetings begin. This approach is seen as practical and realistic by many members of our fellowship. These members have reported that frustration over lack of funds and the sense of urgency to raise money can be counterbalanced by the spiritual unity that results from this focus on our primary purpose.

One of the things that have become evident over the past few years, however, is that large segments of the fellowship want activities and merchandise. If we don't assist in these efforts, members may end up conducting them on their own. Whenever this has occurred, the resulting problems have had considerable impact on all elements of NA, affecting our fellowship's overall success in achieving its primary purpose. We strongly believe that fundraising activities, which divert us from the spiritual nature of our program, are inappropriate and should not be encouraged within the fellowship. Social activities designed to enhance recovery and further unity and members' sense of belonging, however, are not only acceptable but should be encouraged.

We believe that fundraising for the sake of fundraising is questionable, at best. There may be times, however, when a group or service committee finds itself in extraordinary financial constraints and begins to consider holding a fundraiser. At such times, we suggest that careful attention be given to the following questions: Are the funds collected from ordinary Seventh Tradition contributions enough to support the group or service committee's actual needs? Are wants supplanting needs? Is the need for the fundraiser of such a nature that not holding it will result in our primary purpose going unfulfilled? In addition to these questions, we recommend that all aspects of sponsoring a fundraising event be carefully considered.

When these events are held, members of the hosting group or service committee should examine the event with respect to all our traditions, lending their collective experience, strength, and hope to these examinations. One of the major points to consider is the motivation for holding such an event. An examination such as this helps keep us in tune with our principles. The following general concepts have arisen from the experience of our fellowship, and we present them here as starting points for your consideration:

1. Fundraising activities at an NA meeting are not usually appropriate because they may detract from our primary purpose and can present an inaccurate impression of the NA message, especially in the eyes of the newcomer or the non-addict visitor.
2. In order to follow the guidance of our traditions, a fundraising event should be planned and held by and for Narcotics Anonymous members.
3. In order to conform to the ideals of the Seventh Tradition, donations from nonmembers should not be accepted.

4. Since there are often times when we sponsor activities where there is a fixed charge for full participation, the term "donation" should not be associated with these types of fees. In this way, we are not confusing contributions with assessed charges for activities.

5. It must be determined whether the local NA community is willing and large enough to support the event.

6. All aspects of the fundraising event should be consistent with our goal of encouraging recovery from addiction. We should avoid hosting events that might encourage gambling, appear to offer "something for nothing," or award prizes that are either not recovery-oriented or that otherwise may be seen as being inappropriate. For example, a raffle prize such as a car or a television might make someone's living circumstances more comfortable, but at the same time may not be directly related to his or her recovery, whereas a prize of NA literature or tickets to an NA workshop or convention would be recovery-oriented. It should also be noted that, in many USA states and in some other countries, raffles are illegal. It may also be helpful to consider whether raffles--and especially cash raffles or lotteries--appeal more to the spirit of self-interest than the spirit of voluntary support implicit in our Seventh Tradition.

All of the solutions we see to the problems addressed in this article involve communication. We believe that improved communication about the needs of our service bodies results in increased support from NA groups and members. Improved communication improves the accountability of the service structure to our groups and members. Finally, improved communication helps us maintain our focus on spiritual principles like faith and trust, leading us away from fear, distrust, and self-centeredness.

**NA World Services
Bulletin #22R**

Direct Contributions

The following essay was written in 1991 and revised in 1996 and 2002 in response to the issues at that time. Direct group contributions were first accepted as part of A Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous, which was adopted in 1997 and further supported in the IP #25 Self Support: Principle and Practice, adopted in 1998.

We believe that direct group contributions stand a better chance than the "fund flow" plan of providing adequate funds to each level of our service structure, while at the same time maintaining group autonomy, reinforcing the responsibility and authority of the NA group in service matters, providing motivation for regular fellowshipwide communication and service accountability, and promoting NA unity. However, we do not believe that earmarking direct contributions for specific purposes--whether for H&I, PI, Literature, or translations--allows the service structure sufficient flexibility to effectively coordinate the responsibilities assigned to it.

The earliest editions of our fellowship's service manual (*The NA Tree adopted in 1976*) recommended direct group contributions to each level of service. Those manuals suggested that, after a group had paid its bills and set aside a little extra money for emergency use, "excess funds should be diverted to help NA as a whole. A group can do this by contributing to the area or regional committees that serve the group or through contributions directly to the World Service Office of Narcotics Anonymous."

It wasn't until 1982, when the World Service Conference approved a revision of the service manual sections on the group, area, and region, that groups were encouraged to donate all their excess funds to the area committee. Area committees were then to donate their excess funds to the region, and the region's excess was to flow on to the world. This was the "fund flow" plan for funding NA services.

Various problems have been noted over the years with the "fund flow" plan. First, the funds often don't flow; they are frequently used up at the area or regional levels, leaving little or nothing to fund regional or world service operations. At the regional level, this has led to increasing dependence on profits from fundraising activities, such as conventions, dances, memorabilia sales, and NA literature markups, and to decreasing reliance on group support.

At the world level, this has produced a situation where we have a budget that can't be accurately projected, in order to meet the needs of an ever-growing worldwide fellowship.

Direct group contributions to all levels of service can provide a more stable financial base for our service structure. Each group decides what proportion of its excess funds to contribute to its area committee, its regional committee, and world services. Each level of service can be assured a source of income as stable as the NA Fellowship itself. With this stability, service committees might be able to reduce their reliance on fundraising activities for operating income, thereby increasing their ties directly to the NA groups they serve.

Certainly, if an area committee found in any given month that it had surplus funds, it would be encouraged to directly donate them to other levels of service. The same would apply to contributions of regional surpluses. However, if an area or regional committee experienced surpluses month after month, it would probably want to inform the groups it served of the situation so that those groups could adjust their contributions accordingly. This would maintain the integrity of the direct contribution system while making allowance for periodic cash flow fluctuations.

Direct group contributions reinforce the autonomy of the NA group. Each group determines for itself how much it gives to each element of the service structure, based on its own evaluation of how well those elements are meeting the group's needs and the needs of NA as a whole. Our groups have created a service structure to serve their collective needs in better carrying the message and should have responsibility for and authority over that structure.

Direct group contributions put the groups in a better position to carry out their responsibilities and provide them with a better opportunity to financially impact the service structure.

If the groups were funding each level of service directly, all service bodies would thereby be encouraged to communicate effectively and directly with the groups. This would allow groups the most flexibility in deciding where their money goes. If groups are not aware of the work or needs of a particular service body, the chances would be great that they would choose not to participate in funding that body. Direct funding also provides a way for each level of service to determine the amount of support it has from the groups. If funds are not coming in, service committees would be able to infer one of three things: either the groups do not have the money available, the groups do not understand or know about what services have been requested, or the groups do not support the work being done. As you can see, direct funding also gives the groups a greater opportunity to make their voice heard in service matters.

This is not to suggest that groups should earmark contributions for special purposes. The groups have created the service structure not only to deliver services on their behalf but to coordinate those services, as well. In delegating to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill its responsibilities, the groups have also delegated the authority to coordinate the allocation of service resources at each level of service.

In studying the financial condition and means of funding employed by several other fellowships, it has become obvious that we are not alone in facing a money crunch at all levels of service. Direct contributions are not a magic answer that will relieve us of all our financial concerns. Our responsibility as members to fund the services we request is an issue that needs broad discussion. If we truly believe that the solution to our financial difficulties rests with our membership, then it makes sense to put the responsibility and ability to impact finances directly in the hands of our groups.

Fully implementing direct group contributions should be a part of the discussion that we must continue to have as a fellowship concerning the funding of our services. Direct contributions can play a part in helping us to provide greater financial stability through enhanced group autonomy, responsibility, and authority. It encourages better communication between the service structure and the groups, provides more direct means of service accountability, and better promotes the NA unity upon which our personal recovery depends.

NA World Service Board of Trustees
Bulletin #23

Participation and Decision Making at the World Service Conference

For more than ten years, Narcotics Anonymous members have debated the question of who should participate in the decision-making processes of our World Service Conference. Some believe all conference decisions should be made directly by the NA groups, and only by the groups. Others believe all conference members should fully participate in all phases of its decision-making processes, from discussion to voting.

As a fellowship, we have recognized no hard and fast participation rule to be applied throughout Narcotics Anonymous. In 1989, our World Service Conference overwhelmingly approved a motion which replaced restrictive language on local voting in the Temporary Working Guide to our Service Structure with words that allow for variation in local practice:

"GSRs are the only voting members at ASC meetings; ASRs are the only voting members at an RSC meeting..." was replaced with, "Although individual area and regional guidelines differ regarding which participants may vote..."

Regarding participation in the voting of the WSC, however, it's been a different story. From 1982 through 1987, various motions accompanied by heated debate were presented to limit WSC voting to RSRs. A 1982 motion, tabled until 1983, was opposed by fully two-thirds of the voting participants. Each of four motions related to conference voting made in 1984 were defeated by an average of 80% of all voting participants. The following year, when yet another voting rights motion was made, fully two-thirds of conference participants objected to even considering it. With that, many members believed the matter to have been settled. They were mistaken.

In 1987, another motion was made to restrict conference voting rights to RSRs. Tabled to the next year, the motion appeared in the 1988 Conference Agenda Report. A package of papers for and against the motion was widely distributed by the WSC Policy Committee, and the World Service Board of Trustees prepared its own statement on the matter. Following fellowshipwide discussion of the issue, the conference defeated the motion, 27 participants (36%) voting in favor, 40 against (53%), and 9 abstaining (12%). A breakdown of the voting revealed tremendous disparity of opinion between RSRs and the other conference voting participants. RSRs were split fairly evenly on the motion, with 27 voting yes, 24 no, and 7 abstaining. However, the trustees, conference administrative officers, and committee chairpersons were in virtually unanimous opposition to the motion, 16 voting no and 2 abstaining. RSRs cast all the votes in favor of the motion; 40% of the no votes were cast by non-RSRs. Clearly, the issue had not by any means been definitively settled.

Three years later, the motion to restrict WSC voting rights to RSRs was revived. The conference participants had not been given the opportunity to discuss this issue for any significant length of time prior to voting on the motion. The motion was introduced at the very end of the last of seven long conference days. Voting on the 1991 motion showed an overall 12% increase in support of restricting conference voting rights over the 1988 vote, with 35 yes ballots (48%), 28 no (38%), and 10 abstentions (14%). RSRs voted 31 yes and 21 no with 5 abstentions, an increase of 10% in support of voting rights restrictions. Most significant, perhaps, was the

marked shift in votes cast by conference administrative officers, committee chairs, and trustees. A quarter of these trusted servants voted in favor of the 1991 motion, while none had approved the 1988 proposal; less than half voted con, and almost a third abstained. Lack of adequate discussion might account for some of the shift in favor of voting restrictions, but certainly not all of it. The movement to limit conference voting rights to RSRs, decidedly not laid to rest with the 1988 WSC meeting, appeared to be gaining strength.

Clearly, the question of who should vote at the World Service Conference is still an open one, requiring further discussion. It is our hope that your NA community will discuss this issue thoroughly. Our board believes that the voting rights issue is by no means a simple one, but that there are many subjects which need to be considered in relation to it. This issue will be a topic at one of the WSB panel presentations at WSC'92. To the best of our ability, we have presented below some of the arguments we feel need to be addressed in considering the issue of voting rights, along with brief summaries of the opposing points of view on each subject. While these are not the only arguments, they demonstrate the polarity of opinions held by members within our fellowship. We hope you find these summaries useful in your community's discussions of voting rights as you prepare for the World Service Conference meeting this April in Dallas.

Group conscience

RSR-only: "Our Second Tradition says that God speaks to our service structure only through the conscience developed in our groups. The decisions registered at the World Service Conference should reflect only the gathered conscience of the groups as expressed by the votes of RSRs."

All WSC participants: "The World Service Conference develops a group conscience when its members gather to consult their consciences, seek God's guidance, and make decisions. That group conscience is developed from discussion among all members of the conference, and is expressed by the combined vote of all conference participants."

Authority of members, groups

RSR-only: "Unlike some organizations, our members and our groups bear the final authority in NA. Only those representing members and groups should vote at the conference. If trusted servants other than RSRs vote at the WSC, they dilute the authority of the NA groups."

All WSC participants: "Members and groups are responsible for our common welfare, and group autonomy should not affect NA as a whole. With full participation, the interests and authority of members and groups at the conference is spoken for by RSRs; specialized experience of other trusted servants is blended into the WSC mix; the result is a balanced conference decision-making process which best serves our primary purpose."

Leadership

RSR-only: "Our 'leaders' are only trusted servants, taking their guidance from the conscience of the groups. In giving conference officers, committees, and trustees direction for the fulfillment of their responsibilities, only RSRs should vote because only they speak for the groups."

All WSC participants: "We carefully select our WSC leaders to serve us. When the conference makes decisions, we want full access to the insight and specialized experience of conference

officers, committee chairs, and trustees. We allow them to participate fully in all phases of the WSC decision-making process."

Direct representation

RSR-only: "Because NA service authority arises from NA members and NA groups, conference decisions must be made on a representative-only basis. Other trusted servants should not vote on WSC decisions because they do not represent the conscience of any NA groups."

All WSC participants: "If the WSC was NA's government, passing laws and levying taxes, we would want representative decision making at the conference. We would also want a better-proportioned breakdown for representation; today, a region with 60 groups has the same WSC power as a region with 600 groups. However, the conference's concern is not to pass laws and levy taxes, but to serve. A mix of representation and specialized experience produces the most balanced conference decisions for NA."

Accountability

RSR-only: "When committee chairs, trustees, and WSC officers vote in service decisions, they set their own terms for how accountable they are to be held. This is inappropriate. Officers, trustees, and committees should take their direction from decisions voted on by those representing the groups--the RSRs--establishing the degree to which those trusted servants will be held accountable for their duties."

All WSC participants: "Unless conference officers, committee chairs, and trustees take part in voting on WSC decisions, they cannot be held accountable for the consequences of those decisions because they are not co-responsible for them."

Inclusiveness, equality, anonymity

RSR-only: "All NA members take anonymous, equal part in the conference's decision-making processes by voting in their home groups. When RSRs vote at the conference, they express the collective group conscience of all NA communities equally. To allow other trusted servants a special vote violates the spiritual principle of anonymity, setting a few members up with rights not given most members."

All WSC participants: "Officers, committee chairs, and trustees should have the same rights as representative members of the WSC. To exclude them from full participation in the conference makes them less than equal members of the WSC, specially set apart from other members. This is inconsistent with the spirit of anonymity."

Balanced decisions, primary purpose

RSR-only: "Our primary purpose is served best by balanced decisions. Balanced service decisions can only be made by those who do not have a personal stake in the outcome. Conference decisions made by NA group representatives—RSRs—are balanced because they are objective."

All WSC participants: "Representatives, trustees, committees, and officers all have stakes in the decisions of the conference. All of them, however, serve first in the best interests of NA as a whole. The insight and experience of both RSRs and other trusted servants are necessary parts of balanced service discussions and balanced service decisions."

Nature of the WSC

RSR-only: "The World Service Conference exists to carry out the directions of the groups. RSRs bring NA group votes together at the conference. Discussion is necessary only to provide new information."

All WSC participants: "The conference exists to draw together the best information available on issues at hand. For good decisions to be made, everyone must have the ability to cast a vote based on the information presented in conference discussions, not solely on prior instructions."

Partial participation

RSR-only: "Trustees, WSC committee chairpersons, and conference officers should offer insight and information in the discussions that shape a group conscience, but only RSRs should vote in expressing a group conscience."

All WSC participants: "If it is important to include trustees, committee chairs, and WSC officers in discussions, then it is equally important to include them in the decisions arising from those discussions. Otherwise, WSC votes do not represent the full circle of the conference's group conscience, but only a piece of it."

"...Ought never be organized..."

RSR-only: "Responsibility, not authority, is delegated by the groups to the World Service Conference. Decision-making authority resides only with the groups. By restricting conference voting rights to RSRs only, we keep our groups directly involved in all our fellowship's decisions."

All WSC participants: "When groups do not delegate decision-making authority to the conference, they must become highly organized in order to assess WSC issues and make decisions. This distracts the groups from their primary purpose."

We hope the preceding examples of some of the differing viewpoints throughout our fellowship have assisted local communities in their discussion of this topic. Since there is representation on both sides of this issue within the World Service Board of Trustees, the WSB could develop a comprehensive paper after the WSC'92 discussion, presenting both pro and con viewpoints, if the conference believes such a paper would be helpful.

NA World Service Board of Trustees
Bulletin #25

Public Relations And The Traditions

The following is not a policy statement from the World Service Board of Trustees. It is intended merely to stimulate thought and discussion on the importance of our public relations and their effect on Narcotics Anonymous.

WSB External Affairs Committee

We know how important our relations with one another are in NA, because we need one another to continue recovering from addiction. But, even though our groups are autonomous, our fellowship needs more than just the support of our own members. Our community relations also contribute to the fellowship's growth and survival. And that's what this bulletin is about: the principles behind NA's public relations policy. First, we'll look at two reasons why our fellowship seeks good relations with the community. Then, we'll look at what NA's traditions say about our public relations activities.

Community relations—practical importance

It's a given in NA that, as recovering addicts, we have to share our recovery with others in order to stay clean. The same applies to our groups. Without newcomers, the most important people in our meetings are absent. Narcotics Anonymous maintains its vitality by fulfilling its primary purpose: carrying the message to the addict who still suffers.

What does that have to do with our public relations? Simple. NA cannot help addicts if they never hear of us, or if our reputation is such that addicts are advised to steer clear of us. True, NA will reach some addicts directly, good community relations or not. Our members will invite friends, family members, and coworkers who seek recovery to attend our meetings. Other addicts will hear of us at H&I presentations; if they need help, they'll know who to call.

The vast majority of still-suffering addicts, however, must be reached indirectly, through others in the community. Most addicts will only hear of us through media reports and announcements, through professional referral, or through direction given by members of the community-at-large--or they won't hear of us at all. To fulfill our primary purpose, we will need to seek good, cooperative relations with the community around us. We can't fulfill that purpose on our own.

Community relations—a spiritual path

In NA public information work, we acknowledge that we're "a part of," not "apart from" the community around us. We cannot play our part in fulfilling our fellowship's primary purpose on our own resources alone. And the actions we take to fulfill our primary purpose affect our community, not just our fellowship. Our group, our PI subcommittee, our ASC, our region, and our world services are but parts of a much greater endeavor--human society.

If humility means seeing oneself in proper spiritual perspective, then our community relations are a key indicator of our fellowship's spiritual condition. Public relations work offers us an

opportunity, as a fellowship, to improve our spiritual condition. First, PI can help our fellowship remain teachable. As a spiritual society, as a recovery program, and as a social movement, Narcotics Anonymous can learn much from the society around us. Others have done many of the same kinds of things we seek to do. We can learn from them.

Humility also means recognizing our limitations. We don't have all the answers for every troubled person in our community; we don't even have all the answers for every drug addict in our community. In Narcotics Anonymous, one addict shares his experience, strength, and hope with another. Some of the problems related to addiction cannot be satisfactorily addressed that way, and require outside help.

NA is but one tool for addressing addiction, not the only tool. In many communities, a variety of organizations offer help to addicts seeking recovery. Some of them do so with great effectiveness. For whatever reason, some addicts might find recovery more readily through those programs than through Narcotics Anonymous. We don't pretend to have cornered the recovery market. If others can offer help where we cannot, then more power to them.

Humility means recognizing the place we occupy in our community. We have a particular role to play, and a very useful one at that. Our role is different from others'. It's not necessarily better or worse than the role played by others who focus on addiction and recovery--it's just different. Our public relations, and our primary purpose, will best be served if we fill our place in the community with life and spirit, to the best of our ability.

Having considered some of the basic issues related to public information work, it's time to take a look at the specific guidance our Twelve Traditions provide for NA's relations with the community. We'll consider our public relations policy of "attraction rather than promotion." We'll look at what we're attracting people to, and whom we're trying to attract. We'll think about how NA relates to other organizations in the community. Finally, we'll touch briefly on the use of service centers in organizing and administering our public relations efforts.

Attraction

Our Eleventh Tradition tells us that "our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion." One of the spiritual principles underlying that kind of public relations policy is humility. When we share our message in public, we state it simply and directly, rather than making overblown claims about Narcotics Anonymous. We have had what our members feel to be significant success, but we do not claim to have a program that will work for all addicts under all circumstances, or therapeutic views that should be universally adopted. All we say is that, if someone in the community has a drug problem, Narcotics Anonymous may be able to help. We've helped many addicts stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a healthy, productive place in society. We need claim nothing more than that to attract the still-suffering addict to our meetings, and to gain the goodwill of those in community who might refer addicts to us.

It should be emphasized, however, that "attraction rather than promotion" does not mean we do nothing to make ourselves known in the community. It's not only alright, but encouraged, to get the word of NA's existence and usefulness out and about. We don't go about making wild, extravagant claims about ourselves, or downing the work of others. But we're not a secret society, either. Narcotics Anonymous believes in personal anonymity, not fellowship anonymity.

The Eleventh Tradition spells only one public relations restriction out in detail: "we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films." We discourage public media use of full-face pictures of NA members, or stories which identify NA members by name. We do this for two reasons. First, we must be able to assure newcomers that their identities as NA members will remain confidential. Second, we want to keep the public media focus on NA's credibility, not on the credibility of the person carrying the message.

The need to maintain personal anonymity in the public media does not prohibit the use of spokespersons. However, those spokespersons should appear not as NA members, but as special workers whose job is to speak for the organization, or as nonaddict friends of the fellowship. More will be said later of special workers, service centers, and their role in NA's public relations.

The Eleventh Tradition focuses on the need for personal anonymity only in the public media. At other levels, personal anonymity is a matter of personal choice. When we know someone with a drug problem, we may disclose to them our identity as recovering addicts and NA members if we think it might be helpful to do so. Likewise, members who make PI presentations at community events, sharing their personal recovery experience as well as general information about the NA program, have not compromised the Eleventh Tradition. So long as we maintain our personal anonymity in the public media, we are supporting the Eleventh Tradition.

Carrying the message

Why do we publicize the NA program? "Each group has but one primary purpose," our Fifth Tradition asserts, "to carry the message to the addict who still suffers." How can we judge the usefulness of a service project? By considering the extent to which it will help our groups fulfill their primary purpose. PI's main job is to attract addicts to group meetings. As the Basic Text reminds us, "The group is the most powerful vehicle we have for carrying the message." (Basic Text, p. 65.)

But what message? It's important that public information subcommittee members be very clear on this matter, so that they do not convey inaccurate impressions of our fellowship to the community. Our Third Tradition says that "the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using." In Narcotics Anonymous, it's clear that means "to stop using drugs"--not compulsive overeating or gambling or criminality or sex-seeking. The Basic Text goes even further: "The message is that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live.... That is all we have to give." (Basic Text, 5th Ed., p. 65)

One thing more needs to be considered when we talk about the Third and Fifth Traditions and our community relations. Our fellowship's primary purpose is "to carry the message to the addict who still suffers"--and that means any addict still suffering. Our Third Tradition reinforces the utter lack of restrictions, save one, on membership. Many NA areas begin with groups started among addicts who come from the same social, economic, racial, ethnic, or cultural background. There's nothing wrong with that, provided NA grows to reach addicts of all backgrounds. It's important that our public information subcommittees take the time to carefully study their communities. That way, they'll discover the full range of the need for what Narcotics Anonymous has to offer. In the process, they'll also learn how to effectively publicize NA's solution to addiction throughout the community.

Relations with others

Our nonaddict friends have been instrumental in starting Narcotics Anonymous in many communities, and in helping NA grow. As we've already seen, Narcotics Anonymous really couldn't fulfill its primary purpose without the cooperation of others. We do, however, have certain traditions guiding our relations with other organizations, among them the Sixth, Seventh, and Tenth Traditions: "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."

"Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

"Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy."

We seek to provide helpful information about the NA program to others in our community. We seek to cooperate with others as much as we can, as members of the community. At the same time, we maintain a clear distinction between NA and other organizations. We neither endorse nor oppose the work of others. We do not provide funds for the work of others, and do not accept outside funding for our own activities. NA has a place in the community, and it's NA's responsibility to maintain that place.

An area's public relations efforts ought to be supported entirely by its members and groups through its area service committee. Local businesses, government agencies, or civic organizations may approve so heartily of what we do that they offer advertising funds to help us carry our message. Public information subcommittees are encouraged to decline that kind of support, well-intentioned as it is. Narcotics Anonymous needs to pay its own way.

However, it should be noted that self-support questions are not always black-and-white. A phonline ad in the local paper, annotated "sponsored by John Doe Chevrolet," would clearly denote an outside contribution. However, most American TV and radio stations provide a certain amount of free public time to public-benefit organizations. Some transit companies offer reduced busbench rates to nonprofit endeavors. On the one hand, these could be considered "outside contributions." On the other hand, to decline them would be the same as to decline to drive on publicly-funded roads while on a Twelfth Step call. Each public information subcommittee will have to exercise its own best judgment in such cases.

There is one final matter to keep in mind when considering our relations with other organizations. In order to maintain its focus, Narcotics Anonymous has established a tradition of neutrality on public issues. We do not take positions as an organization on anything outside our own specific sphere of activity. Narcotics Anonymous does not express opinions, either pro or con, on civil, social, medical, legal, or religious matters. We do not even take stands on secondary addiction-related issues, such as criminality, law enforcement, drug legalization or penalties, prostitution, HIV infection, or free needle programs. We believe our sole competence is in providing a place where suffering addicts can identify with others like themselves who've experienced substantial recovery from addiction. To remain free from the distraction of controversy, we focus our energy on what we do best, and only on that.

Community service centers

Public information work requires attention to detail, careful record-keeping, and consistent follow-up. Responsible administration of PI affairs can take a great deal of time--perhaps more time than subcommittee volunteers have available. To assist in the administration of PI services, some areas and regions have created service centers, staffed by special workers.

"Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional," our Eighth Tradition says, "but our service centers may employ special workers." We don't have paid counsellors at our group meetings. Recovery is freely shared, addict to addict. Public information work, however, is not usually the kind of addict-to-addict personal sharing the first part of the Eighth Tradition refers to. Our goal is to provide consistent, responsible service, so that as many addicts as possible can find their way to our meetings. If your area needs additional help doing this, a service center might provide that help. For information on the nuts and bolts of opening and operating a community service center, contact the World Service Office.

Good community relations are vital to the fulfillment of NA's primary purpose. Without the help of others in our community, many addicts will never hear of Narcotics Anonymous. We have a responsibility to maintain our relations with the community, so that our message is carried as widely as possible, and so that, in turn, we serve our community as effectively as possible. For our fellowship's own well-being, we need to learn as much as we can from other organizations in our community, and to humbly acknowledge our place in the community. We in Narcotics Anonymous are "a part of" the larger community around us, not "apart from." The Twelve Traditions provide specific guidance for our public relations activities. But without the humble desire to serve our fellow addicts, we'll have no message to carry, and no fellowship to publicize.

NA World Service Board of Trustees
Bulletin #27

HIV And AIDS in NA

This article was generated by the World Service Board of Trustees in April 1993 in response to the needs of the fellowship. It represents the views of the board at the time of writing.

Any life-threatening disease causes us to work our program rigorously, whether we're afflicted by it ourselves or are supporting members who suffer from it. HIV and AIDS have become a reality in the NA recovering community. The paradox of this disease, like the disease of addiction itself, is the need to belong while already feeling separated. The strain of having to deal with a potentially fatal disease striking so many addicts, compounded by the disease of addiction itself, can be overwhelming. It is no surprise that, at times like these, we often ask ourselves if continued recovery is worth it. At our potentially weakest moment, we need more than ever the strength found in our fellowship.

HIV and AIDS affect us all in NA. Fear of the virus can allow the defects of self-centeredness, denial, rationalization, and the urge to run to assert themselves. The spiritual principles that made recovery possible and that strengthen our groups must continue to guide us during these times.

HIV and AIDS in NA are considered by some as an outside issue--a subject not to be discussed for fear of diluting our message of recovery from drug addiction. That point of view has not been stated in any world-level publication, but it has been implied through silence. Our lack of direction coupled with ignorance of the virus and an often inflexible interpretation of the traditions has caused many groups and committees to label HIV and AIDS as outside issues. While there are many issues around HIV and AIDS that may well be outside issues, the experience of recovering addicts with HIV is not.

Committees responsible for conventions, learning days, workshops, etc., have often been directed not to include HIV/AIDS as a topic. Our reasoning for this was based on our lack of experience and our fear. Instead, we have been guided toward having topics on life threatening diseases in general. This was sometimes done out of concern that participants of a topic meeting on AIDS might choose to discuss the medical treatment or the political ramifications of the disease. While some of those fears might have some basis in reality, open-mindedness keeps us focused on our shared experience, strength, and hope.

There are a range of HIV and AIDS-related issues that are outside issues; for example, offering medical information, educating using addicts about needle-cleaning or endorsing the availability of clean needles, supporting or opposing AIDS quarantine proposals, encouraging specific methods of safer sex, or commenting on the merits of the "Just say no" campaign in limiting the spread of AIDS. NA's involvement in any of these activities would undoubtedly draw the NA name into public controversy. And that would surely compromise our ability to carry the message of recovery from addiction.

However, there is more to HIV and AIDS in NA than outside issues. This virus has put strains on our relationships. Despair is closer to some of us than others, and our *Just for Today* prayers become much more relevant. Anybody who has ever gained a practical understanding of "living

in the present" has some incredible experience, strength, and hope to share with all of us. Although we all live with the life-threatening disease of addiction, those of us with HIV and AIDS sometimes have a heightened awareness of living just for today. We may all gain from sharing and being open toward an understanding of new aspects of powerlessness and surrender.

While in active addiction, we all faced a life-threatening disease. In recovery, NA members have historically continued to face other such diseases, but never to the extent being encountered today. Some of our groups in urban areas are experiencing a very high percentage of members with HIV or AIDS.

When first faced with these overpowering numbers, some of our groups made mistakes. Fear and ignorance separated groups and members from open-mindedness and the ability to care for all their members. Much worse than that was the isolation felt by members living with the virus. Recovery in this fellowship can be tough enough when we are accepted. When we are rejected, recovery may seem impossible.

The only requirement for membership, according to our Third Tradition, is the desire to stop using drugs. Nothing more, nothing less. It seems simple enough to remember, but fear and ignorance can be strong influences. Groups which began experiencing large numbers of members who were HIV positive learned that when there is an "us" and "them", someone is being treated differently, and our groups suffer. These groups learned that a group's survival depends upon autonomy, anonymity, unity, and our Fifth Tradition. A group's primary purpose must remain constant: to carry the message of recovery to addicts who still suffer. Having learned from these mistakes, these groups may understand this tradition better than most because the meeting topics, though often reflecting our struggle with HIV and AIDS, are centered on recovery from addiction.

"Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions." We may need to remind ourselves to use caution in relating some of our experience. Some members may feel they need to share about their illness only with their sponsor or a close friend, while others choose to discuss their experience with HIV or AIDS openly at meetings. Ideally, a meeting is a haven where we can all feel and be safe to share. Regardless of how we share--whether one-on-one or in a meeting--it is important that we do share.

Some of us with HIV or AIDS come to NA with weakened immune systems. At times, we may not be able to get to meetings or might be too ill to go out at all. We may be dealing with the necessity of taking medications. Some of our literature, such as *In Times of Illness* and the Tenth Chapter of our Basic Text, give us experiences with having to deal with doctors and medication in our recovery. For those who are hospitalized or bedridden at home, we have publications like *The NA Way Magazine* and *Meeting by Mail*.

If we believe that one addict sharing with another is without parallel, then we need to understand that this concept applies not only in times of joy but also in times of sorrow and grieving. In our consideration of the HIV/AIDS issue, let us be honest, open-minded, supportive, and nurturing. Let us unite to learn, unite in our prayers, and unite in the spirit of love so that our ignorance may be replaced with open-mindedness and the willingness to learn.

NA World Service Board of Trustees
Bulletin #28

Freedom From Prejudice, Part 3

This article was generated by the World Service Board of Trustees in April 1993 in response to the needs of the fellowship. It represents the views of the board at the time of writing.

More frequently than ever, the World Service Board of Trustees is being asked to comment on the issue of prejudice within NA. It would be easy for us to write a paper which simply says: Prejudice is wrong. Cut it out! However, we believe that there is no imposed solution. Only we, as individual members of Narcotics Anonymous, can resolve this problem. It presents each of us with the challenge to practice more fully those principles which make our recovery possible--the spiritual principles found in our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Each of us is responsible for carrying the NA message without regard to age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion.

Most of us have felt the pain of prejudice at different times during our lives. Even so, we often delude ourselves into believing that we are personally free from all prejudice. This type of denial allows us to pass judgment on the quality of another member's recovery or sponsor, tune out when certain members share, or avoid particular people or groups of people. We may make snide or "humorous" remarks about someone's race, sexual preference, age, gender, body shape, culture, or spiritual beliefs. We may avoid members who are physically ill or are taking prescribed medication. Whether subtle or blatant, all forms of prejudice harm our unity and prevent us from fulfilling our primary purpose.

We do not and cannot recover alone. Some members can remember being unwelcome in other fellowships. Some of us recall sitting alone with a White Booklet waiting for another addict to show up at a meeting so that we could have our own NA group. Another addict, *any addict*, was exceedingly welcome. As we have become prosperous, laden with choices of where to recover and with whom, we have allowed the defect of prejudice to assert itself and, more sadly, to live in our hearts.

While it is possible for us to walk through the doors of NA with the defects of character which promote attitudes of hostility toward others, over time these defects make recovery difficult if not impossible. As a defect, prejudice shares some of the same characteristics as our disease. It is based in fear, self-centeredness, suspicion, and intolerance. These qualities represent our disease rather than the spiritual process of recovery in NA. Our program is carried from one addict to another without regard to anything but the desire to recover from our disease.

Although the spirit of Narcotics Anonymous is without concrete definition, it seems to encompass tolerance, acceptance, love, gratitude, and giving. If we can achieve and maintain this spirit, we will flourish. Our literature states that there are three things essential to our recovery. One of these is open-mindedness. We can have no reservations about maintaining the character defect of prejudice which separates, divides, isolates and can eventually destroy us as a fellowship. We cannot be fooled by the subtleness of our disease that closes our minds and causes us to think of one addict as different from another. We must surrender to this aspect of

our disease and allow a loving God to heal us as a fellowship, allowing us to continue to focus our efforts on our primary purpose.

Our message says that any addict seeking recovery can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way of life. Ours is a message of hope and freedom. Let this message be our common bond. It is to this NA way of recovery that we direct our attention and effort toward the changes that need to occur within ourselves to produce the miracles of recovery.

We need to look at our diversity as the strength that allows each of us to truly say "any addict seeking recovery." Because we see this diversity as a wealth of color, race, gender, culture, and belief, we wholeheartedly welcome all addicts. It is not enough to tolerate; we welcome with open arms. It is not enough to accept; we give. We do not need to fear each other; we love. With these principles, we may stop the destruction of our disease, have our intolerance, fear, and self-centeredness removed, and do together that which we cannot do alone.

NA World Service Board of Trustees
Bulletin #29

Regarding Methadone And Other Drug Replacement Programs

This bulletin was written by the World Service Board of Trustees in 1996. It represents the views of the board at the time of writing.

Not all of us come to our first NA meeting drug free. Some of us were uncertain about whether recovery was possible for us and initially came to meetings while still using. Others came to their first meetings on drug replacement programs such as methadone and found it frightening to consider becoming abstinent.

One of the first things we heard was that NA is a program of complete abstinence and "The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using." Some of us, upon hearing these statements, may have felt that we were not welcome at NA meetings until we were clean. But NA members reassured us that this was not the case and we were encouraged to "keep coming back." We were told that through listening to the experience, strength, and hope of other recovering addicts that we too could find freedom from active addiction if we did what they did.

Many of our members, however, have expressed concern about individuals on drug replacement programs. Questions come up regarding such individuals' membership status, ability to share at meetings, lead meetings, or become trusted servants on any level. "Are these members clean?" they ask. "Can one really be a 'member' and still be using?"

Perhaps by answering the most important question first—the issue of membership—we can establish a context by which to approach this issue. Tradition Three says that the only requirement for NA membership is a desire to stop using. There are no exceptions to this. Desire itself establishes membership; nothing else matters, not even abstinence. It is up to the individual, no one else, to determine membership. Therefore, someone who is using and who has a desire to stop using, can be a member of NA.

Members on drug replacement programs such as methadone are encouraged to attend NA meetings. But, this raises the question: "Does NA have the right to limit members participation in meetings?" We believe so. While some groups choose to allow such members to share, it is also a common practice for NA groups to encourage these members (or any other addict who is still using), to participate only by listening and by talking with members after the meeting or during the break. This is not meant to alienate or embarrass; this is meant only to preserve an atmosphere of recovery in our meetings.

Our Fifth Tradition defines our groups' purpose: to carry the message that any addict can stop using and find a new way to live. We carry that message at our recovery meetings, where those who have some experience with NA recovery can share about it, and those who need to hear about NA recovery can listen. When an individual under the influence of a drug attempts to speak on recovery in Narcotics Anonymous, it is our experience that a mixed, or confused message may be given to a newcomer (or any member, for that matter). For this reason, many groups believe it is inappropriate for these members to share at meetings of Narcotics Anonymous.

It may be argued that a group's autonomy, as described in our Fourth Tradition, allows them to decide who may share at their meetings. However, while this is true, we believe that group autonomy does not justify allowing someone who is using to lead a meeting, be a speaker, or serve as a trusted servant. Group autonomy stands only until it affects other groups or NA as a whole. We believe it affects other groups and NA as a whole when we allow members who are not clean to be a speaker, chair a meeting, or be a trusted servant for NA.

Many groups have developed guidelines to ensure that an atmosphere of recovery is maintained in their meetings. The following points are usually included:

- Suggesting that those who have used any drug within the last twenty-four hours refrain from sharing, but encouraging them to get together with members during the break or after the meeting.
- Abiding by our fellowship's suggested clean time requirements for service positions.
- Seeking meeting leaders, chairpersons, or speakers who help further our primary purpose of carrying the message to the addict who still suffers.

We make a distinction between drugs used by drug replacement programs and other prescribed drugs because such drugs are prescribed specifically as addiction treatment. Our program approaches recovery from addiction through abstinence, cautioning against the substitution of one drug for another. That's our program; it's what we offer the addict who still suffers. However, we have absolutely no opinion on methadone maintenance or any other program aimed at treating addiction. Our only purpose in addressing drug replacement and its use by our members is to define abstinence for ourselves.

Our fellowship must be mindful of what kind of message we are carrying if a still-using addict leads a meeting, or becomes a trusted servant. We believe that under these circumstances we would not be carrying the Narcotics Anonymous message of recovery. Permissiveness in this area is not consistent with our traditions. We believe our position on this issue reinforces our recovery, protects our meetings, and supports addicts in striving for total abstinence.

Note: This bulletin addresses the use of methadone maintenance as a drug replacement strategy. It is not addressing the medicinal use of methadone as a pain killer. We encourage those who have concerns about the use of methadone in pain management to refer to Narcotics Anonymous pamphlet, In Times of Illness.

**NA World Services
Bulletin #30R**

Theft of NA Funds

The following paper was written in 1996 and revised in 2002 in response to a number of letters indicating that theft of NA funds is a recurring issue in our fellowship. In preparing this paper, we have relied on the experience of many groups, area and regional service committees, convention corporations, and service offices as shared with us in correspondence and at workshops on the issue. We encourage you to make use of this valuable and often painfully learned experience in your management of NA funds.

Substantial donations are contributed by the NA Fellowship every year. These funds are given by NA members who trust that they will somehow help other addicts get clean. While this money is precious, the member's trust is even more so. We need to keep the image of that one member and that one donation in mind whenever we make decisions about handling NA's money.

Most of NA's money gets where it is supposed to go. NA members serving in positions of financial responsibility for the fellowship volunteer countless hours to make sure everything adds up. Services such as local phonelines are paid for; literature is purchased and available to members at meetings; tens of thousands of meetings take place every week in rooms for which NA pays rent. Many individual trusted servants follow guidelines and pass on funds that are used to further our primary purpose. All of these things happen because NA communities utilize responsible accounting practices.

Safeguarding Funds

Theft can be avoided by consistently and diligently following responsible financial principles and practices. The pain and conflict caused when one of our members steals from us, as well as the loss of funds that might have gone to help the still-suffering addict, point to our responsibility to prevent theft from happening in the first place.

Most theft of fellowship funds occurs when precautionary measures are not in place or are in place but not used. Some of us have hesitated to either institute or use these measures because they make us uncomfortable--we believe that they are somehow insulting to the people we ask to serve, or they seem too troublesome to follow. However, the very best safeguard against theft is to remove the opportunity to steal. It is far more uncomfortable and troublesome to deal with a theft after it has taken place than to take measures to prevent it from happening in the first place.

Selecting Trusted Servants

Our Fourth Concept tells us how to select our trusted servants: "Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants."

So what exactly are these "leadership qualities" the Fourth Concept tells us to look for? Honesty, integrity, maturity, and stability, both in recovery and in personal finances, are but a few. We often avoid asking questions regarding the financial stability of those we are considering for

these types of positions, because those questions may be uncomfortable for us or we somehow feel they are inappropriate, given the spiritual nature of our program. We sometimes ignore evidence that a person is having a difficult time with his or her personal finances and should not have the additional burden of responsibility for NA's money. Not only is it okay to ask members standing for election about their qualifications in these areas, it is irresponsible not to.

Substantial clean time and financial stability should be required for positions where money is handled. Many NA communities have found it helpful to develop a list of questions regarding employment, service experience, experience with handling funds, and financial stability. These questions are then asked of all nominees as a matter of course, so that people do not feel singled out based on personalities.

Responsible Management

"NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly." Our Eleventh Concept points out how very important NA funds are. In keeping with the spiritual principles of this concept, guidelines regarding the handling of funds should be developed and adhered to. The guidelines should include both recognized accounting practices and procedures that ensure the accountability of our trusted servants.

The Treasurer's Handbook is an excellent resource for groups and service committees to use in instituting accounting procedures. All guidelines should include appropriate safeguards, such as monthly reporting, regular audits, two-signature checking accounts, and monthly reconciliation of original bank statements. For groups without checking accounts, many of these practices can still be incorporated into the handling of NA funds.

To paraphrase one of our sayings, an addict alone with NA money is in bad company. It is critically important that all processes be monitored by another person: two people count receipts; two people make the bank deposit (and this should be done immediately, not the following day); two people reconcile the original bank statements; and most importantly, two people are always present when any funds are disbursed. Financial records should be readily available to other trusted servants. It is important to note that other assets, such as convention merchandise, literature, and office equipment, should be treated as carefully as money.

Financial procedures need to be written into guidelines to require a review and signature of those responsible for handling funds before they are put into positions of responsibility. Members who know they will be held to standardized accounting and auditing procedures will most likely behave in a responsible manner. Include a statement that theft will not be tolerated, and outline the process that will be followed if a theft occurs. If you are unsure about how to write adequate financial guidelines, please contact the World Service Office for assistance.

When Safeguards Fail

If we develop and follow these procedures, we will make it almost impossible for anyone to misappropriate or steal NA funds. If someone does steal from us, the first question we should ask is one of ourselves: Did we adhere to all of our accounting procedures and safeguards? If the answer is no, we as a service committee also bear substantial responsibility for the theft. We will want to review our procedures to ensure that they are complete and resolve to adhere to them in the future.

But suppose the answer is yes, we followed our guidelines to the letter. We did everything in our power to prevent a theft, and someone stole from us anyway. When this happens, there is often a mixture of reactions, ranging from, "Let's forgive and forget; after all, we're addicts who are prone to acting out on our disease. We don't want to run the individual out of meetings and into a possible relapse," to "Let's throw the thief in jail!" But whatever it is, we don't want our initial emotional reaction to dictate the outcome of the situation.

Our program of recovery provides every member with an opportunity to behave responsibly in difficult situations and make amends. We are closest to the spiritual principles of our program when we begin to deal with a theft by encouraging the member who has stolen funds to make amends, which can then provide healing for all involved.

This is not to say that the disappearance of NA funds should be taken lightly or that a service committee should sit and passively wait for a member who has stolen funds to be moved to make amends. We instead encourage a process that is both responsible and spiritual, taking steps of increasing severity should they prove necessary.

First of all, a thorough review of all books and financial records should be conducted to make sure the funds were actually misappropriated. How much? By whom? What failing in the accounting procedures and safeguards allowed this to happen?

If it becomes clear that money has indeed been taken, the group or service committee should then schedule a meeting, making absolutely sure the individual(s) who took the money is informed of the meeting and given the opportunity to present his or her point of view. At this meeting, there should be a format that allows time for everyone involved to express their feelings and concerns. This allows everyone to give their input and may also allow a "defusing process" to occur. After all sides have been heard, a break in the meeting format is encouraged to allow all present enough time to get in touch with their own Higher Power and focus on spiritual principles, before coming back to decide the best course of action.

If the individual admits to the theft and agrees to pay back the missing funds, a restitution agreement can be developed. Such an agreement can include regular payments at any interval acceptable to all involved, though it is best not to drag out the process unnecessarily. Most agreements specify regular weekly or monthly payments until the full amount is repaid. We strongly suggest drafting a legally binding document, utilizing legal advice if possible, and having it signed and witnessed. Let the individual know that if the restitution agreement is not adhered to, you intend to take legal action based on the signed and witnessed restitution agreement.

A report about the situation should be published, and regular reports on the status of the restitution agreement should be published until the agreement is satisfied. Protecting the identity of the person involved is secondary to being accountable to the fellowship for its funds and ensuring that the person is not put in a position where he or she may do further harm.

Again balancing spirituality with responsibility, we have found that it is best to remove the individual from his or her service position and not consider the person for another position until he or she has dealt with the issue through the process of the steps.

If the individual does not appear at the special meeting, you will need to ensure that every effort to contact the person has been made. Use registered mail to send a letter explaining that an audit of financial records has been performed, that facts show the individual is responsible for missing money, that repayment is expected, and what the consequences will be if the individual does not respond to the letter. Copies of the letter should be put in a safe place for further reference. This may seem severe, but if the previous steps have been taken without result, sometimes something this harsh is the impetus that encourages the individual to make restitution.

If the individual refuses to repay the money, or agrees to a plan but does not follow through with the agreement, or if the person has disappeared, it may be appropriate to take legal action. The decision to take legal action is an option that does not compromise traditions or spiritual principles, but it should be our last resort, opted for only when everything else has been tried. We strongly suggest that the decision to prosecute be thoroughly explored before going ahead, using area and regional service committees and world services as resources.

Resolution And Recovery

Even if a successful resolution is reached, many of us will still be angry and hurt and may want to shun the person involved. Although this is understandable, we have to remind ourselves that NA's primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We also need to remember that our disease will surface if we are not diligently working a program of recovery. As NA members practicing spiritual principles, we should all support the individual in continuing his or her recovery, utilizing meetings, a sponsor, and the Twelve Steps. We should offer the same love and support we would to someone who has relapsed by using drugs.

The misappropriation of NA funds affects groups, service committees, and world services in their efforts to carry the message to the still-suffering addict. The process necessary to deal with such incidents typically has long-term effects--conflict between members, disunity, disillusioned members--on any NA community, directly affecting the newcomer. The safeguards recommended in this bulletin not only protect our funds, but protect us from our disease. We implore NA communities worldwide to develop and follow procedures that protect NA funds; doing so will keep our future secure.

NA World Services
Bulletin #31N

Meeting Attendance Cards

This paper, written in 2002, is meant to serve as a response to the numerous inquiries we have received from groups regarding meeting attendance cards. The meeting attendance card phenomenon is multinational in scope. We are aware of it occurring in parts of North and South America, as well as in Asia, the Pacific Rim, and Europe. Please note, however, that we are working from our North American experience, and your own national or local situation might greatly affect the appropriateness of this bulletin.

The group is the final authority in this matter. The suggestions offered here are merely intended to aid groups in their decision-making processes.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, many of our groups have experienced a dramatic increase in the number of people attending an NA meeting with a meeting attendance card of some type. The group is asked to validate that person's attendance by signing the paper, sometimes referred to as a court card. (When we use the terms *meeting attendance card* or *court card* we mean any one of an assortment of signature cards or other papers a person presents for a signature to verify their attendance at an NA meeting.)

Many of these attendance cards came about as tools developed by drug courts to verify the mandatory attendance component of their sentences. Our initial interactions with drug courts began in the United States in 1998. There were approximately 100 drug courts in operation in the US at that time. It is projected that there could be 1500 drug courts in the US alone by 2004! Similar programs have begun to spring up in other countries as well. The strategies presented in this resource paper will help equip groups and members to welcome the additional newcomers without being overburdened.

One of the principal concerns expressed over and over again is whether signing a meeting attendance card conflicts with the guidance expressed in Traditions Six and Ten. We don't believe that it does in principle—though we encourage each group to discuss this question for themselves, just as we have done. The rationale for our thinking is: If a group were to report on members' attendance, their behavior, whether they stay for the whole meeting, their participation or lack thereof, or report somehow on the nature of their recovery, we might say that the line between cooperation and affiliation had been crossed. But when, at the request of people attending our meeting, we simply provide verification of their attendance without any consideration of why they are requesting that verification, we believe that is a reasonable approach that doesn't endorse or affiliate with the requesting agency.

We must remember that our intent here is solely to carry the message; it is not to serve as an agent of, or assistant to, an outside organization. Addicts arrive at the doors of Narcotics Anonymous for a variety of reasons, many times relating to external pressures. Ultimately, their desire to stay in NA will depend on whether or not they have a desire to stop using drugs. Our

purpose—to carry the message of recovery from drug addiction—remains the same regardless of the reason(s) a person may come to our meetings.

Clearly, the Fourth Tradition leaves the final decision to each group as to whether or not to accommodate meeting attendance cards. We would ask that in making your decision you include in your considerations whether it is our place to judge the desire of anyone to stop using. Our literature, in discussing Step Twelve, states, “It is absolutely none of our business to decide who is ready to hear the message of recovery and who is not. Many of us have formed such a judgment about an addict’s desire for recovery and have been mistaken.” (*It Works: How and Why*, Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc. 1993, p.120) How many of our members first came to NA not sure whether they were really addicts or whether they were just here to please someone else?

Some groups have expressed a frustration and a feeling of being challenged by an influx of people with meeting attendance cards coming to their meetings. Some have gone so far as to tell individuals with these cards that they are not welcome at that group. While we understand the frustration these groups might feel, we would encourage you to avoid such behavior.

Sometimes when a group in a small or rural NA area is feeling overwhelmed by attendance cards, they seek help from their area service committee. A discussion is held at area to determine which groups are best able to accommodate a large influx of newcomers and which groups might be unable to maintain their atmosphere of recovery under this circumstance. An area meeting list is prepared for agencies that send individuals to meetings with attendance cards to be verified, showing which groups will sign the cards and which will not. Cooperation among the groups within an area, and between the area and referral agencies, enables each individual group to conduct its recovery meeting with a minimum of disruption to the essential atmosphere of recovery.

Two primary goals of a Narcotics Anonymous group are to help its members stay clean and to carry the NA message to the addict who still suffers. If we don’t make individuals feel welcome at their initial exposure to Narcotics Anonymous, why would they come back? In addition, accommodating this protocol strongly enriches our public relations and fosters goodwill toward Narcotics Anonymous.

Strategies

Some groups express concern at someone actually *signing* the cards, fearing for the signer’s personal anonymity or even the potential for the signer to be required later to testify in court about this signature. There are other options that might assist those who have this concern. The secretary, group service representative, or some other trusted servant or NA member has the option of writing the name, date, and time of the meeting and signing only his or her first name and last initial, or the group can have a group stamp made and simply stamp the card so that no one individual needs to sign it. Some groups have a group business card printed that lists the name of the group, the time it meets, etc. These are dated and placed on the literature table and can be picked up by anyone who needs them to verify meeting attendance on that date. Any of these methods will acknowledge that the individual appeared at an NA meeting and will do so without compromising the anonymity of another NA member.

One or more of the following suggestions might help a group to be successful in their accommodation of meeting attendance cards.

- When individuals ask to have a meeting attendance card signed, a trusted servant or other group member signs it at his or her convenience.
- Indicate clearly in your meeting format that, in order to minimize any disruption to the recovery meeting, meeting attendance cards are collected at the beginning of the meeting and can be retrieved at the end.
- Have a designated member sign, stamp, or pass out the cards off to the side, thus avoiding the need to actually collect and redistribute them.
- Process the cards at the beginning or at the end of the meeting. Your group will decide what works best in its unique environment.
- Request that people new to Narcotics Anonymous respect the group by not being disruptive or “crosstalking” during the meeting.
- Make it clear that everyone is welcome, but that group rules exist so that recovery will be available for newcomers and oldtimers alike.
- Ensure that an adequate supply of local meeting schedules is available so that new people know for future reference where all the local meetings are held.

Potential NA members come to their first meetings from many referral sources. If your group resources are being challenged by a large contingent of addicts attending from a facility of some type, consider contacting your area service committee for help. Your area public information subcommittee might be able to contact the referral source director and explain the dilemma, depending on your local situation. If other NA meetings are available, it is possible that the facility might send some of their residents to one meeting and some to another so as not to overwhelm the group’s ability to welcome the attendees at either location.

Another strategy to consider when a group’s resources are at risk of being depleted is to inquire as to the possibility of renting a space for a new meeting at the drug court facility. This enables some members from the community to support this meeting without the meeting overwhelming another group’s atmosphere of recovery, ability to provide sponsorship, or ability to remain self-supporting when faced with the sheer numbers of newcomers appearing at one time.

Many areas are discovering that a service committee presentation to their local drug court stating what we can do, as well as what we can’t do, is helpful. This will go a long way toward eliminating, or at least reducing, the confusion that can result from the interaction between Narcotics Anonymous and the judiciary. Whereas we certainly don’t endorse or align with the judicial approach to drug addiction, there are many in the legal and correctional fields who do believe in Narcotics Anonymous. We cooperate with the professional community by providing information about what Narcotics Anonymous is and what we offer.

“NA as a whole has no opinion on drug courts, but drug courts are free to have an opinion about NA. There’s nothing in the traditions that prohibits us from cultivating good relationships with local drug courts. We can do this by cooperating with them: Welcoming the newcomers they send us and signing or stamping their court cards, having our PI committee members meet with drug court professionals, and providing those professionals with material that explains our program to the non-member.” (The above paragraph has been excerpted from the *NAWS, Inc., Annual Report*, 1 January-30 June 1999, p. 13.)

Conclusion

Drug courts, meeting attendance cards, and mandated attendance at NA meetings have become a reality of life and can be compatible with our primary purpose. A Narcotics Anonymous group has two basic choices in facing this reality: be proactive, have a plan of action, and then consistently carry through with it; or choose not to validate the attendance cards when they are presented. Ultimately, this is the group's choice to make. We would urge you—when making your decision—to seek the course of action you feel is most likely to help the addict who still suffers. NAWS may be a valuable resource for your group in deciding what is the best course of action. Feel free to contact the World Service Office for assistance.

NA World Services
Bulletin #32R

USA Banking, EIN, And Tax Liability Information

This paper, written in 2005, is meant to provide interested groups with information regarding three related topics: 1) group bank checking (demand deposit) accounts, 2) Employer Identification Numbers, and 3) potential tax liability. Please keep in mind that the information is directed toward the NA groups that are in the USA and may at any time become outdated by some action beyond our purview. Further, this information may not be applicable for NA service committees. We suggest that NA service committees in the USA contact a licensed local tax professional for advice on these matters.

Group Checking (Demand Deposit) Accounts

Many NA groups make the decision to utilize a bank checking account to help manage and protect the NA funds they collect. While this commitment to accountability is commendable, caution should be exercised when a group decides to open a bank checking account. Such accounts typically require an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) identification number to be obtained. Two different numbers are used for this purpose: a Social Security Number (SSN) for individuals and an Employer Identification Number (EIN) for groups and entities other than individuals. These identification numbers can be used by the IRS for financial tracking purposes, and banks are required to report certain account activity information to the IRS, large cash deposits and interest income, for example.

It is important that NA groups refrain from using an individual's SSN to open a checking account. If an individual's SSN is used to open an account, he or she will be held responsible for the financial activity of that account regardless of whether he or she has knowledge of or has participated in the checking account activity. Also, the funds in the account may be considered the personal funds of the individual whose SSN is on the account, and in some cases may be accessed by that individual as long as that SSN is on the account. For these reasons, we recommend that any group that decides to open a checking account use only an EIN.

Please keep in mind that using a SSN to open an account is different from supplying identification, like a driver's license number, for authorized signatures on an account. Banks typically require those who have the authority to withdraw funds to supply specific information to be kept on record at the bank. This information is not used to initiate the bank account, does not assign IRS responsibility for account activity, and is changed as signatures on the account change.

Employer Identification Number

The Employer Identification Number, also known as a federal tax identification number, is used by the IRS for identification purposes. If your group is interested in acquiring an EIN, you will need to complete IRS Form SS-4. A copy of the form can be obtained by contacting the IRS, logging on to their website at <http://www.irs.gov/index.html>, or stopping by a US Post Office. The application form is straightforward, and there is no registration fee.

Here is some information that may help when filling out an EIN application form. The form asks about the type of organization, and usually NA groups will choose “An unincorporated group of individuals.” The form also asks the reason for applying for the number, and most groups will select “for banking purposes only.” In addition, we recommend that when asked, the activities of the group be stated simply so as to be understandable to those outside of NA, for example, “provide a non-medical, self-help atmosphere for those with drug problems to stop using drugs” would probably work well.

The EIN may take a few weeks to be issued, or you can contact the IRS via phone to obtain the EIN on the same day, before sending the application. Once your group is assigned an EIN, you may receive a notice from the IRS to file a Form 940 or 941 (for employers); simply return the notice marked “no employees and no payroll” as long as that is the case. Care should be taken not to use the number for any purpose other than the group’s business. It is important to keep in mind that the original applicant is responsible for all financial activity linked to the EIN. If anyone uses the number inappropriately, it may cause a report to be made to the IRS and result in considerable difficulty to the EIN holder.

Any NA group that acquires an EIN should consider that the IRS could at some point in time contact them and request valid financial activity information. This is one reason that NA groups will want to maintain detailed records, including treasurer’s records, bank statements, receipts and any other documentation of their financial activities. We suggest that NA groups maintain accurate financial records by using the group record worksheets in the Group Treasurer’s Workbook. The worksheets and other above mentioned records should be kept for at least five years. Care should be taken when assigning responsibility for storage of the records, so that they remain available to the group if needed.

The EIN is sometimes mislabeled a “nonprofit” number. It is not, nor is it a “tax-exempt” number. For more information on issues of nonprofit and tax-exempt status, see the following sections of this bulletin.

Tax Liability

Whether an NA group must file a tax return depends on how much money they receive each year. Though we cannot say definitively who needs to file a return, we can say that an NA group that takes in less than \$5,000 total income (regardless of the source) in a year is typically not required to file a tax return. If your group takes in more than \$5,000 or there are any special circumstances, we suggest checking with a licensed local tax professional for advice on how to best meet your IRS reporting obligations, if any.

Nonprofit Organizations

A nonprofit organization is one that, when it generates income in excess of expenses, does not use that excess in ways that personally “profit” its members or directors. For example, if a group collected \$1,000 during the year and actually spent only \$900, the group would not divide the leftover \$100 among its members. The money can, however, be used to reimburse individuals for personal expenses incurred from activities related to the purpose of the organization. In other words, reimbursing gas or meal expenses for a trusted servant who is required to travel as part of his or her service commitment would not be in conflict with the nonprofit concept. Nor is it a

conflict for an NA group to send money to service boards or committees to fund their work in service to the fellowship.

While NA groups practice the principle of being nonprofit, the legal status of an NA group is a different matter. Such status is discussed further in the next section.

Tax-Exempt Status

As we said earlier, acquiring an EIN and securing tax-exempt status are two different things. An EIN can be obtained relatively easily; tax-exempt status is a much more complex endeavor. Typically, tax-exempt status is achieved as part of the process of becoming a corporation. The IRS number associated with this type of corporation is 501C-3, also known as a not-for-profit corporation. This sometimes-costly process of incorporating requires formal, detailed reporting and financial accountability to the IRS and state agencies on an ongoing basis. For these reasons, we recommend against incorporating and seeking tax-exempt status for most NA groups whose annual gross income is below \$5,000. If your group takes in more than \$5,000 annually, while NA World Services is available as a resource, we strongly recommend also discussing the topic with a licensed tax professional familiar with not-for-profit and tax-exempt entities.

It is also important to remember that a tax-exempt or not-for-profit status cannot be “loaned” to any other element of the fellowship. If an NA group does not have tax-exempt status and that status is required in order to secure a facility, they may want to find an alternative location for activities or meetings.

State Sales Tax or End-User Tax

The last tax liability topic we will address is sales tax or end-user tax liability. Many states require consumers to pay a tax on goods and services purchased or used in their states. Typically, NA groups must pay these taxes. We recommend to those groups who have secured 501C-3 status to check with their state tax agency for the application of this tax in their state.

Conclusion

We hope this information is helpful to your group in your efforts to meet your financial responsibility to the fellowship and any government agencies. As always, thorough discussion among interested members will serve best in your decision-making efforts. We also suggest seeking guidance from an informed licensed tax professional whenever there is a question. Finally, we remain available as a resource for you.

NA World Services
Bulletin #33N

USA Liability Insurance Bulletin (December 2006)**Introduction**

This bulletin is intended to provide NA service committees with general information about liability insurance coverage for their groups and activities. NA World Services receives frequent requests for information on issues related to liability, insurance, and availability of coverage. We have seen an increase in liability litigation by members and others that can cost thousands of dollars to resolve. This can result in a substantial loss of resources to a group or service body that has no liability insurance coverage. With that considered, NA World Services is providing the fellowship with current information about liability insurance. All groups are encouraged to obtain liability insurance through local brokers or through insurance brokers listed by NA World Services as a resource.

Liability insurance issues can be unfamiliar to many of our members, and the data necessary to make good decisions when buying insurance may seem complicated. Many of us do not think it's likely we will experience injury or related occurrences at our meetings and activities. To others, this whole discussion may seem too organized for NA. But the truth of the matter is that NA trusted servants, groups, and committees have exposure to liability and liability insurance can provide vital protection for these individuals and for fellowship funds. The Eleventh Concept proposes that we take all reasonable steps to manage the fellowship's funds. Protecting NA funds by maintaining insurance coverage helps us carry out this responsibility.

Additionally, the Seventh Tradition essay from our Basic Text reminds us that we only ask members to do their fair share. We practice that principle when we protect trusted servants from unnecessary risk of personal liability for group activities. NA World Services encourages groups, areas, and regions to give serious consideration to this issue. It is in the spirit of supporting this effort and in response to the many inquiries we have received from around the fellowship that this bulletin has been developed.

This specific information is primarily directed toward the United States NA community, but it may be adaptable elsewhere as well. However, the spiritual principles discussed here may have applicability for any service body considering the underlying issues addressed in this bulletin. We recommend any evaluation or decision-making processes include thorough discussion among interested members and guidance from a local, licensed insurance professional with experience insuring nonprofit organizations. The term "group" used throughout this document refers to any NA group, service board or committee.

What is liability insurance?

We have tried to address this question as simply as possible but have had to use legal and technical terms to describe this issue. "Liability" means legal responsibility to a third party or parties (another person or organization) for one's acts or omissions. Failure of a person or entity to meet that responsibility leaves one open to a lawsuit for damages from any resulting injury or

loss the third party or parties suffer. “Liability damages” are generally a sum of money to compensate the injured party.

A liability insurance policy is a contract or agreement between the insurance company and a policyholder whereby the insurance company agrees to compensate an injured party or parties that suffer a loss or injury due to the acts or omissions of the policyholder. Said another way, liability insurance provides protection against claims from third parties (e.g., hotels, convention centers, churches, attendees, or innocent bystanders) for bodily injury, personal injury, or property loss or damage (i.e., accidents). Liability insurance also covers the cost to defend an asserted claim from a third party against the policyholder whether or not the policyholder is later found not to have done anything wrong. When an incident occurs that is covered by the policy, the insurance company will interact with the individual(s) who may have been harmed in an effort to resolve any related costs, within the limits provided in the policy.

Liability insurance basically covers the negligence of the policyholder and others covered as “insured parties.” “Negligence” is defined as the failure to exercise the care toward others for a foreseeable and unreasonable risk of harm that a reasonable or prudent person would have taken in the same or similar circumstances, or taking an action that a reasonable person would not.

The primary liability insurance policy for organizations holding meetings and events is called Commercial General Liability (CGL) insurance. The types of coverage included in liability insurance policies vary, and numerous exclusions to coverage apply to policies. CGL insurance policies can vary slightly from state to state, but the typical policy covers the following things: bodily injury or death, and property damage to third parties, personal injury (including libel, slander, and false arrest), advertising liability, fire legal liability, and medical payments for injury to third parties. Property damage to premises (e.g., hotels, convention centers, churches, etc.) in the care, custody, and control of the policyholder is also covered as long as the property is used for seven (7) or fewer days.

A partial list of typical exclusions found in a CGL policy includes coverage for damage, loss, or injury from intentional acts or omissions (i.e., violence or a malicious act). Also excluded are damage or loss to person’s or property from arson, losses or damage from the use of an automobile, material published with knowledge of falsity, and discrimination against certain parties.

Because policies vary in what they cover, it is very important to fully understand any insurance policy coverage before purchasing it.

Why is liability insurance needed?

A growing number of facilities require liability insurance from groups renting meeting or event space. Having such coverage can make finding meeting space easier, but there are even more important reasons for securing liability insurance, such as personal liability of trusted servants.

If an accident or incident occurs at an NA meeting or event, the trusted servants who coordinate meetings or activities could be held liable and their personal assets could be placed in jeopardy unless insurance coverage is in place. Insurance provides trusted servants, groups, and service committees with a level of protection by reducing or eliminating any financial risk to fellowship funds or trusted servant’s personal finances.

Insurance coverage can provide significant legal support in the case of civil litigation or law suits. For example, if an injury occurs at a meeting place due to the group’s negligence (e.g., if

someone suffers substantial injury from a fall caused by a loose microphone cord or is severely burned by a hot coffee spill) the insurance company typically will conduct an investigation, represent NA in any court proceedings, and pay any damages up to the limit of the liability policy. Usually, when an insurance company handles a claim it does not require any expense or substantial involvement from the trusted servants of the group or committee. Additionally, in those cases where local insurance coverage is in place, NA World Services is less likely to get involved. This saves additional time and resources because we need not become a party to local matters in which we are not involved and for which NA World Services has no responsibility.

Who should purchase liability insurance?

Every NA group and committee who meets or holds functions should consider liability insurance coverage. Though each group or area service committee could purchase liability insurance coverage individually, most policies currently held within the fellowship are at the regional service committee level, as most times this will be the most economical approach. In addition, local activities, such as dances and picnics, and annual events like retreats and conventions should be included in a regional-level policy unless the event carries its own insurance coverage.

How to provide proof of insurance to a facility?

Many times a facility will request verification that the group, committee, or event has liability insurance coverage. This request requires you to provide specific information from the group or committee to the group's insurance company. The insurance company will then issue the facility a Certificate of Insurance which verifies and discloses the amounts of the coverage. We have included a Proof of Insurance Request Form as an addendum to this bulletin that can be used for this purpose.

Some facilities may also require that they be named as Additionally Insured on the certificate of insurance. This means that the facility is asking the group to specifically add the facility on its insurance policy to cover (to the extent the policy allows) any claims against the facility that may arise from your group's use. Keep in mind that the group's insurance company may charge for adding Additionally Insured language to the policy, but the charge should be minimal. Discuss this important detail with your group's insurance agent.

What to do if someone gets hurt?

It is a good risk management practice to discuss how to respond to liability situations with your group's insurance agent prior to any incidents. In the unfortunate event of an incident or accident, the first order of business is to get medical help for the injured party or parties and address any emergencies. After that, if possible, the group needs to collect complete contact information (including statements of what witnesses saw, names, contact information, place, and times) from those involved and/or observers.

Regarding issues of anonymity, keep in mind that the information you are collecting is not intended to be used to reveal NA membership, but rather as a part of the legal resolution process. In that way, collecting this information is not in conflict with our Twelve Traditions.

What if a group or member gets “served”?

Sometimes an injured individual may file a civil law suit against those involved or identified as having some responsibility for the incident or accident. As a part of that filing, you may personally receive “service of process”. Service of process is the procedure whereby a defendant (person or organization being sued) in a lawsuit is given legal notice that a lawsuit has been filed against them and a specific court is exercising its authority over that person or organization. Generally service involves the delivery of a formal legal document. The purpose of service of process is to enable the person or organization being sued the opportunity to respond to the lawsuit. Once a person has been “served,” that person, or the organization represented by that person, typically has thirty (30) days to respond. If the court does not receive a response within the thirty (30) days, the person or organization can be held in default. If a party is held in default, the other party automatically wins and is awarded damages by the court.

Our recommendation is to respectfully accept the service of process documents. Accepting these documents does not imply admission of guilt. If you are served, we recommend you contact your group’s insurance agent. The insurance company will likely take up the issue for you, depending on the parameters of your coverage.

Other issues of coverage

Certain activities like dances, conventions, and campouts carry a greater degree of risk for injury and may require more coverage than recovery and committee meetings. It is important that the group’s insurance agent be provided accurate information regarding the nature of activities and events in order to assure proper coverage. It is also advisable to send event contracts that include insurance provisions to the group’s agent to review, prior to signing the contract. In this way the agent will have the opportunity to give the group an assessment of the requirements, quote any additional insurance coverage premiums required, and allow the group’s committees to make informed decisions. Whenever signing contracts, for insurance coverage purposes, the policyholder’s name should appear on the contract. For example, if an area was holding a function, the area would identify themselves as “The ABC Area of the XYZ Regional Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous” on the contract.

On a related topic, some service boards may be interested in protecting themselves against liability for decisions they make as a part of their fiduciary duties. Board members can find such protection through purchasing directors’ and officers’ liability coverage (referred to as D&O insurance). Additionally, service boards may be able to purchase dishonesty coverage for protection against internal theft, including forgery and alteration of checks, by its employees. Finally, service committees that employ special workers need to have workers’ compensation coverage. These plans cover employees injured in the course of doing their job. This coverage is compulsory in most states, and not to have it would be a violation of the law.

All of these matters are best discussed with a professional—an insurance agent, a state insurance agency, or an attorney, for example. Bear in mind that in many states a service board may need to be incorporated in order to have access to these types of insurance coverage. This bulletin is, however, not intended to persuade you to incorporate. There are many other issues beyond insurance involved in that decision. If you have further questions about incorporation, you can contact the World Service Office.

Additional resources

In an effort to support regional service committees in this matter, we have also attached two tools for your use. Addendum 1 of this bulletin is a six-step process that may help in securing liability insurance coverage. Addendum 2 is a sample Proof of Insurance Request Form that may simplify the process for groups and committees to request needed insurance documentation.

In addition, we have listed those insurance companies that we know have helped other service committees to secure group liability insurance. This is not intended to be an endorsement, nor does NA World Services have any affiliation with these companies. If your regional service committee finds group liability insurance coverage with a company not on our list, we ask that you forward that company's contact information so that we can make it available to other service committees.

Conclusion

This bulletin is merely an overview and should not be considered the final word about liability insurance. We invite members and service committees to share your group's experience with this matter in an effort to have the most complete information available for other NA communities. It is our hope that through this cooperative effort we can address this issue of growing importance to our fellowship.

Liability Insurance Addendum 1 A Six-Step Process for Acquiring Liability Insurance

If your group's regional service committee is considering purchasing insurance for its NA groups and activities, here are some steps to follow that may assist you in your efforts.

Step One: Discuss your needs

First we suggest your region hold discussions about obtaining group liability insurance coverage. For practical financial purposes, it is usually substantially less expensive for a region to obtain a group policy for all of its groups, rather than each group obtaining an individual group policy.

Step Two: Gathering data necessary for adequate coverage

The next step is to acquire the right policy(ies) for your needs. A professional such as an insurance agent, a state insurance agency, or an attorney can provide expert consultation, but here are some useful things to know.

The policy cost is usually based in part on the number of locations covered, which might correspond to the number of meeting facilities in your area. You may want to consider using a regional meeting directory to help with this.

They may ask your group representative for the number of members. An estimate is sufficient. Your group might base this number on the average meeting size in your region. For example, if there are 200 meetings in the region and an average of 20 members at each meeting, you would estimate 4000 members (200 x 20 = 4000 members).

Another consideration in determining the group's policy may also include the nature of activity that your group wants to cover, as it relates to NA events (i.e., dances, picnics, campouts, and conventions). It will be important to your group and your agent that the groups give the agent an estimate of how many events are held and the number of attendees at each event.

Step Three: Determine the insured's name

The next step is to be sure that the group name used for insurance purposes is consistent with the name used to rent meeting space, or a building for an NA function. From an insurance underwriting standpoint, consistently using one group name for each entity is best. For example, use either "SWRSCNA" or "Southwest Regional Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous," but not both.

Step Four: Contact a local agency

Locate a local, licensed insurance agency that can write a general liability policy rated for nonprofit "social gatherings, meetings, or dances." This is insurance industry terminology that describes the necessary coverage for the kinds of activities usually associated with NA meetings and/or activities and social functions. The insurance agent needs to understand insurance needs for nonprofit groups. Your group may also contact one of the companies listed below.

Step Five: Determine adequate coverage

Your group insurance liability limits need to provide adequate coverage. We recommend a minimum of \$300,000 combined single liability coverage. If you want to cover local activities and conventions, we would strongly encourage you to increase liability coverage to \$1,000,000. Ask the insurance agent for options. The thought here is that activities such as dances, conventions, and campouts involve activities that are typically considered higher risk. The possibility of injury increases, for example, when members are lighting fires at a campout or dancing at a dance, compared to sitting in a meeting.

Also ask questions about how the cost of legal support is provided in the policy. Some policies will pay all defense costs over and above the limit of the liability coverage. In other words, a \$1,000,000 policy would pay any defense expenses independent of that \$1,000,000 limit. Other policies might include legal expenses within the policy's limit, essentially offering less coverage. The option you choose will usually affect the cost of the policy. Our recommendation is, whenever possible, purchase coverage with legal expense coverage independent of the policy limit.

Step Six: Supply addresses and contact Info

Be sure to use a stable mailing address and a stable point of contact for all communications with the insurance company. A problem, from an insurance carrier's standpoint, is having the ability to contact the committee if necessary. For example, if a premium is not paid on time or if someone files a claim, the agent will need to contact the committee. Given our collective history of trusted servant rotation, this can be a significant challenge. For this reason you may want to supply the agent with several names as backup and corresponding contact information. Committees should also update that information as trusted servants change.

Finally, some service bodies have purchased liability insurance policies for their groups from the following insurance companies. This information is not offered as an endorsement, nor does NA have any affiliation with these companies. Typically insurance companies will not deal with your authorized group representative directly, so your representative will need to obtain a referral to an authorized insurance agent in your area.

The Cincinnati Insurance Company PO Box 145496 Cincinnati, Ohio 45250-5496
513.871.2000

Philadelphia Insurance Companies One Bala Plaza, Suite 100 Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004
800.873.4552

Other companies may be added as they are identified.

Liability Insurance Addendum 2 Proof of Insurance Request Form

Often times a facility will ask us for proof of liability insurance coverage. In most cases a Certificate of Insurance issued from the group’s insurance carrier is all that is required. This certificate provides the facility with proof of insurance coverage and the amount of coverage from the insurance company. This is a routine procedure, and insurance companies will typically provide this free of charge. To request a certificate, please fill out sections 1, 2, and 4 of the form and return it to the appropriate trusted servant assigned to work with the region’s insurance provider.

Other times, the facility requires that they be added to the insurance policy as an Additionally Insured on your group’s insurance policy so that any claims against the facility that arises from your use will be covered (to the extent the group policy allows). Keep in mind, your group’s insurance company may charge for adding Additionally Insured language to the policy. If this is what is needed, the entire form must be completed and returned to the appropriate trusted servant for follow-up.

Part 1: To be filled out for all requests

Full name of facility or its legal **entity**: (Ask the location or facility to provide this information. For example, a meeting may be held in XYZ Park, but the certificate is to be issued to their legal entity which is The City of ABC):

Full address of entity/location:

Part 2: To be filled out for all requests

Facility/Entity contact person (full name please): _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email address (if any): _____

Part 3: Fill out only if the facility/entity has asked to be named as “Additionally Insured”

Specific wording and/or endorsements to be stated on the certificate for the additional insured
(Have the location or facility provide this information to you in writing):

Part 4: To be filled out for all requests

Group or committee name:

Contact person's name:

Contact person's position:

Contact person's phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____