

PSA Campaign Cautionary Statement

The public information videos that are currently available through the World Service Office are expected to have some important effects on the fellowship wherever they are shown. It is very important that public information subcommittees at the area, regional and world levels take an active role in encouraging the fellowship to be prepared at all levels to handle these changes. We can avoid many potential problems by carefully considering what the impact of showing these PSA's might be, and by becoming prepared. Just what effects do we anticipate? The following list should be of help in answering that question.

1. The general public will gain an increased awareness of the existence of Narcotics Anonymous. They may call us for information about our program, there may be more requests for literature, and the issue of anonymity at the public level may be challenged more. We must keep ourselves well informed and ready to meet those challenges.

2. We may experience an increased number of newcomers walking into our meetings having never gone anywhere else for help before. We will need to be even more vigilant than usual about approaching new people, making them feel welcome, and helping them to get oriented to our Fellowship.

3 The phonelines will ring a lot more. This may be the most significant effect that the videos produce, so each area should take a careful look at its system of handling and responding to calls before showing the videos. Look at the number of calls that the phonelines receive now, and be prepared for perhaps a several hundred percent increase in calls. This will, of course, depend on a number of factors, including what kind of P.I. approach was taken before the use of these videos, but committees should be prepared for the largest increase possible.

a. More non-addicts will likely be calling. These will include professionals and family members who are either interested in getting help for an addict, or interested in more information about Narcotics Anonymous. You may want to put together a small informational packet to be sent out in response to requests of this nature. It is important to keep the phonenumber volunteers aware of the fact that Narcotics Anonymous is involved in only one activity; we help addicts get and stay clean. If the caller wants some other service, the simplest solution is to refer them to a local telephone number which is set up to make referrals. In this way we can avoid making specific referrals ourselves, and keep our own primary purpose clearly in focus.

b. More addicts who want immediate help from N.A. will call. Twelfth Step lists will need to be maintained vigilantly so that we can respond to these in as timely and helpful a way as possible.

4. More inquiries about N.A. will be coming in the mail. Depending on whether you use a local mailing address or not, these may come directly to you or they may come to the World Service Office. Because these videos will be shown on network T.V. as well, inquiries from your local areas may come to the World Service Office regardless of your local approach to P.I.

a. If you use a local P.I. Box in your videos, volunteers will be needed to respond to letters. Many letters may be handled with a brief note or form letter and a few pamphlets.

b. The World Service Office will experience a tremendous increase in the volume of inquiries in response to these videos. It is extremely important that all areas keep the World Service Office up to date on information about your H&I and P.I. subcommittees, and be sure that the Phoneline Directory is updated regularly. The World Service Office will only be able to make referrals to your local groups and/or service committees if its information is kept accurate and up to date.

5. Cooperation among area and regional P.I. subcommittees that are located near one another is always important, but with the use of videos, these relationships become even more significant. Because there is often overlap in viewing area, committees must communicate with one another before, during and after use of the PSA's. Beforehand the local tags that will be used should be decided upon jointly by all affected committees. Do you need to list more than one phone number? Is more than one major city included in the viewing area? Is there a rural area within viewing range of the station which also has N.A. contacts? Questions like these should be discussed before taking the videos to the station to have the local tags put in place. While the videos are being aired, meeting directories of all adjacent areas should be kept on hand by the phonelines so that referrals can be made regardless of where the caller is from.

If the PSA's are successful, they will result in the growth of the fellowship. Most local N.A. communities have found that as we grow we must make changes to accommodate growth. Meeting formats that were adequate when we were 5 or 10 addicts meeting weekly suddenly become strained when there are 20 or 30 addicts at each meeting. The group is then forced to make a decision: Do we revise our meeting format to accommodate a larger crowd? (For example, begin breaking up into groups, or begin using a podium, or look for a larger meeting room, or write out our format in more detail). Is it time to start new groups? Should we hold a trusted servant learning day to prepare for the increase in service responsibilities that our growth has brought? Groups who have not carefully considered these things with an open mind have all too often found themselves in a crisis that was solved only when the fellowship shrank, making the old format usable again. The crisis may indeed pass that way, but if we are truly following our Fifth Tradition, then growth in numbers is an important goal. We must be flexible and open minded if we are to handle our own growth as a fellowship.

The following checklist of questions should be used by your committee to take a preparedness inventory as you begin a public information campaign using the video public service announcements (PSA's):

P.I. Committee inventory questions

1. Is our P.I. subcommittee well organized (guidelines, contingency plans) and do we have experienced trusted servants to do the work?

2. Area we truly responsible to those they serve: Are we reporting at regular area and regional meetings, and do we have our area/region's support to do the campaign?

3. Are we working in cooperation with other committees in our area/region that will be affected by the PSA's? (Obviously, if the phoneline committee is separate from P.I., they should not only be informed but should be involved in the planning of the campaign).

4. Do we need to communicate with surrounding areas or regions that will be affected by the PSA's? If so, do we have a clear means of communication

established so that cooperative planning and implementation of P.I. efforts that are cross-area or cross-regional can be done? (See point 5 above).

a. If region: Have we adequately informed our areas about what we're doing? Have we given them an opportunity to have input?

b. If area: Have we informed our RSC what we're doing? Are we duplicating effort by not communicating with other area P.I. subcommittees? Does what we're planning fit in to what is being done by our RSC?

Phoneline Committee Questions

1. Are we prepared to handle the increase in calls? Do we even know what we're getting into? Have we made a reasonable effort to project what the response will be, and to take steps to meet that increased workload for the volunteers?

2. Do we have a contingency plan if our phone service or Twelfth Step lists get overloaded? Do we know what to do if the PSA's generate calls from the media or professional agencies? Do we have a contingency plan from our P.I. subcommittee on how to handle those types of calls?

3. Is our phoneline committee receiving support from the Fellowship (in both finances and time) to allow us to take on a potentially large number of calls in a short period of time?

4. Are we working in cooperation with the P.I. subcommittee and our area or regional service committee to insure communication and responsible handling of calls?

Area Service Committee Questions

1. Is our area service committee well organized and receiving the support from the groups that will allow us to involve ourselves in a PSA campaign?

2. Are our subcommittees (H&I, P.I., Phonelines) functioning in a manner that assures responsible handling of increased calls? Do we know what shape those committees are in?

3. Have we checked out the possibility of working in cooperation with the surrounding areas and/or regions to do a PSA campaign in our part of the state or country?

4. Have we discussed this at the RSC to determine what is happening in other areas?

5. Can we handle financially an increase in phoneline costs, literature costs, etc.? If not, what can we do to help us reach a place where we can afford to move ahead?

Regional Service Committee Questions

1. Is our RSC well organized and receiving the support from the areas that will allow us to involve ourselves in a PSA campaign? Are we ready for this or should we have other priorities?

2. Are our subcommittees (H&I, P.I., Phonelines) functioning in a manner that assures responsible handling of increased calls, requests for literature, speakers, etc.? Do we know what shape those committees are in? What support will they need to do their jobs with an increased workload?
3. Have we checked out the possibility of working in cooperation with surrounding regions to do a PSA campaign in our part of the state or country? Will our P.I. efforts affect those surrounding regions?
4. Have we talked with WSC P.I. to make sure we have all that's available to help us when we're ready to move ahead? Do other regions have experience that would be beneficial?
5. Financially, can we handle an increase in phoneline costs, literature costs, etc.? If not, what can we do to reach a place where we can afford to move ahead?
6. Has our P.I. subcommittee presented us with an overall P.I. plan for approval by the RSC?