

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROFESSIONALS

This resource can be used when interacting with **professionals from the criminal justice system**, including **drug court professionals**. These frequently asked questions are meant to help trusted servants educate criminal justice professionals about what NA has to offer to their clients. The Twelve Traditions and the abilities and experiences of the local area service committee will ultimately guide an area's relationship with any professional.

Trusted servants can consider the following points when preparing for interactions with professionals:

- ◆ Responding to questions in your own words often works best—the responses listed below can be used as a guide.
- ◆ Short, simple, direct responses work best. Audience members or those who stop by an exhibit booth usually have limited time and will appreciate a brief response.
- ◆ If NA specific language such as home group is used, please explain the meaning to the audience.
- ◆ Try to keep responses focused on the questions asked. Remember, the goal is to inform members of the public about Narcotics Anonymous—personal disclosure is usually not appropriate or helpful (for example, sharing about the step you are working, how many members you sponsor, and your service commitments is not necessarily relevant).

What follows are possible answers to questions frequently asked in a criminal justice setting:

Q&A

1

How can I arrange for NA members to coordinate a meeting in my facility?

The Hospitals and Institutions Committee is usually responsible for facility meeting commitments, and I will provide you with their contact information. Often the H&I committee will arrange with you a date on which to provide the facility staff with a presentation and discuss the various ways a meeting could be started in your facility. Depending on the availability of trusted servants and prior facility commitments, the H&I committee members may be able to bring a panel meeting into your facility. If they cannot provide this service at this time, they will discuss with you how to start a self-sustaining meeting within your facility.

Q&A

2

How does NA help parolees upon their release?

NA helps parolees by helping them to feel welcome at meetings, informing them about group commitments which are usually helpful in building a support system of recovery peers, offering information about sponsorship (where an experienced addict helps the newer member), and introducing the new member (parolee) to experienced recovery members. Often new members are invited after a meeting for

coffee, and members can be asked to pick up the new member who is without transportation.

Addicts who are reentering society and are already involved in NA may have arranged for transportation upon release with another member. Our experience demonstrates the importance of attending an NA meeting on the day of release for achieving a drug-free life. Those who are reentering and have no recovering friends to meet them can make contact with NA by calling the local NA helpline. Provide the number and inform audience as to whether the community has a list of members who are willing to transport addicts to meetings.

Q&A

3

Can NA members pick up parolees at the gate?

NA does not pick up parolees as a practice, but sponsors or recovering friends of released inmates may choose to pick them up.

Q&A

4

How can our facility receive a donation of literature? We're a rather large facility with a comprehensive drug programming and we want NA to be a part of the services we offer.

Facilities can contact NA World Services for a free sample literature packet, as well as free subscriptions to our publications, *Reaching Out* and *The NA Way Magazine*. Some local NA communities include free NA literature for institutions in their budget, and may also be able to help in that way. [Inform audience of community's practice with literature.]

Our literature is for sale directly from NA World Services at www.na.org. We also encourage professionals to keep in mind that friends or relatives of addicts can purchase NA literature from NA World Services and have that literature sent directly to the inmate.

Q&A

5

We would like to start our own NA group. How do we do so?

An NA meeting starter kit and *Institutional Group Guide* are available from NA World Services (www.na.org) or [provide local RSO or ASO, if applicable].

Q&A

6

We've had experience with members from NA over the years, and those experiences have been inconsistent. How can we be sure NA will consistently serve the needs of the inmates here?

Today, we have NA members who are willing to meet with staff at your facility and discuss what you would like from NA and what we can realistically provide. We will also provide you with local contact information for any issues that may arise with your facility. Sometimes, in our enthusiasm to help, we may have overextended ourselves by offering services that we were not able to follow up with. Please keep in mind that we are a volunteer organization and are continually striving to improve the ways in which we provide services. We are also happy to help start meetings in

your facility that can eventually be self-sustaining. Following this presentation, we can discuss your particular needs and arrange for a local NA member to contact your facility.

Note for local service committees: Inconsistencies sometimes happen even though we strive to keep our commitments. Often an inconsistency can be attributed to supplying the facility with only one contact person. It is suggested that a facility be given area information and multiple contact persons to focus on building a relationship with facility personnel.

Q&A

7

Does NA provide housing/shelter or help incarcerated addicts to find jobs?

NA does not provide housing, shelter, or employment opportunities. Our primary purpose is to help addicts recover from drug addiction, and our traditions (the principles that guide our service efforts) caution us against affiliating ourselves with specific recovery homes or places of employment. At meetings, individual NA members may have suggestions about how to find housing or employment, but those members are speaking from their own experience, not on behalf of NA as a whole.

Drug court personnel who work with drug court referrals may have different questions about NA and the services they can expect. The following questions may be helpful in those interactions.

Q&A

1

How can we work with NA? How can we build a relationship with NA?

A presentation about NA may be the best way to learn about our program of recovery and begin an ongoing relationship. Although NA's Twelve Traditions (the principles that guide our service efforts) limit us from affiliating with outside organizations, we are eager to build a relationship based on the goals we share.

Q&A

2

Can we have meetings here at the courthouse?

Depending on the area's capabilities, you can arrange for a panel or a meeting to be held at the courthouse. A panel is a regularly scheduled presentation that NA members conduct at a facility like the courthouse. An NA meeting is self-sustaining and run by NA members. We are happy to talk with you about which type of meeting might work best.

Q&A

3

Does NA sign court cards?

Many NA meetings sign court cards. This is a choice made by the members of that particular home group, or the area as a whole. If a meeting has made a decision not to sign court cards, this is usually listed in the local meeting directory. You can encourage your clients to check with an NA member before the meeting to be sure the group signs court cards.

Q&A
4

For those groups that do sign court cards, will you guarantee that my parolees/probationers will be attending the meeting, and will be staying through the entire meeting?

Attendance at our meetings is free and voluntary. We cannot guarantee that any person will attend a meeting or remain for its entirety. NA maintains no attendance records. We are a program for addicts who want to recover.

Q&A
5

Can sponsors and/or other NA members testify in court to verify the work that my clients are doing?

As indicated in NA's informational pamphlet, *Sponsorship*, sponsorship is a relationship between two members of NA – a more experienced member helping a newer member. Attending court on behalf of a “sponsee” would be an individual decision on the part of a sponsor (or any NA member). NA's traditions (the principles that guide our services) speak to maintaining personal anonymity, neutrality, and having no opinion on outside issues.

Q&A
6

Can I read my clients' step work, and will the sponsor verify that my clients are doing the work that they say they are doing?

Because NA is not affiliated with the courts and because our primary purpose is to help others lead drug-free lives, we would not verify step work with the court. Verifying or sharing step work in that way has the potential to jeopardize the trust that is essential to the sponsorship relationship. However, a client may choose to share their step work with you, and that decision is entirely theirs.

Understanding the criminal justice system and the people who work within that system can only help to build strong, long-lasting relationships. Criminal justice professionals have a variety of relationships with treatment centers and recovery homes that may or may not be different from the type of relationship they can have with NA. It is up to us to clearly communicate the kind of relationships we can have, given our primary purpose and traditions. This kind of communication can only help to build strong relationships and offset any possible misunderstandings.