



Narcotics Anonymous®

World Services

NA WORLD SERVICES BULLETINS

Between 1983 and 1998, when it was disbanded, NA's World Service Board of Trustees issued thirty bulletins on a variety of topics. In 1995, a number of bulletins were removed after a review and revision process. In 2002 NAWS (Narcotics Anonymous World Services) again reviewed and revised the bulletins, further, issuing Bulletin #31. The following bulletins remain available on the NAWS web site. www.na.org

- Bulletin #13 Some Thoughts Open our Relationship to Alcoholics Anonymous
- Bulletin #14 The Relationship of NA to NarAnon and Families Anonymous
- Bulletin #15 Open and Closed NA meetings
- Bulletin #17 What is Addiction?
- Bulletin #18 Special Interest Meetings
- Bulletin #19 Gender-specific Language and Use of the Word "God" in NA Literature
- Bulletin #21 The Generation of Funds (fund-raising) and the Seventh Tradition in NA
- Bulletin #22 Direct contributions
- Bulletin #23 Participation and decision making at the World Service Conference
- Bulletin #25 Public Relations and The Traditions
- Bulletin #26 A Report on the NA Literature Trust
- Bulletin #27 HIV and AIDS in NA
- Bulletin #28 Freedom From Prejudice
- Bulletin #29 Regarding Methadone and Other Drug Replacement Programs
- Bulletin #30 Theft of NA Funds
- Bulletin #31 Meeting Attendance Cards





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World Services

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. It represents the views of the board of trustees at the time of writing.

The question of just how Narcotics Anonymous relates to all other fellowships and organisations is one which generates a good deal of controversy within our fellowship. In spite of the fact that we have a stated policy of “cooperation, not affiliation” with outside organisations, much confusion remains. The most sensitive issue of this nature involves our relationship to the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. A constant stream of letters is received by the World Service Board of Trustees asking a variety of questions about this relationship. The time has come for another Newsline article to shed some light on this important subject.

Narcotics Anonymous is modelled after, though not identical to, Alcoholics Anonymous. Nearly every NA community in existence has leaned to some degree on AA in the NA group’s 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 their door. So we will look at those 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 said that while they cannot accept addicts who are not alcoholics as members, they freely offer their steps and traditions for adaptation by any groups who wish to use them. They pledged their support in a spirit of “cooperation, not affiliation.” This farsighted solution to a difficult problem 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 who tried to adapt those principles 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 have handled that dilemma, one more look at AA history will be helpful. Another thing Bill W. used to frequently write and speak about was what he called the “ten-strike” of AA, the wording of the Third and Eleventh Steps. The whole area of spirituality vs. religion was every bit as perplexing for them in those days as this unity issue has been for us. Bill liked to recount that the simple addition of the words “as we understood Him” after the word “God” laid to rest 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 the most 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. It was a masterful stroke. With that single turn of phrase the foundation of the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship was laid.

Our First Step gives us one thing to focus on, so we can do that one thing supremely well. We carry the message to the addict who still suffers. As a bonus, this 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 ongoing recovery; the desire to use has been removed, but “powerless over our addiction” is as relevant to the old timer as it is to the newcomer. Our addiction begins to resurface and cause problems 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 re-applying our spiritual principles before our disease takes us that far. So our First Step applies regardless of drug of choice, and regardless of length of clean time. With this “tenstrike” as its foundation, NA has begun to flourish as a major worldwide movement, clearly appropriate to contemporary addiction problems. And we’ve only just begun.

As any given 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 off the specific drug, don’t mix very 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 the pack, so that a separate set of terms is needed when discussing it. 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 basic fundamentals: We are powerless over a disease that gets progressively worse when we use any drug. It does not matter what drug was at the centre for us when we got here. Any drug we use will release our disease all over again. We recover from this disease 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 those steps. Ironically, we cannot mix these fundamental principles with those of our parent fellowship without crippling our own message.

Does this mean that AA’s approach is inferior to ours, and based on denial or half measures? Of course not! A casual, cursory glance at their success in delivering recovery to alcoholics over the years makes

it abundantly clear: Theirs is a top notch 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.

The simple fact is that both fellowships have a Sixth Tradition for a reason: to keep them from being diverted from their 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 their perfect right to adhere to their own traditions and protect their focus. If we cannot use language consistent with that, we ought not go to their meetings and undermine that atmosphere. In the same way, 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 fundamentals clear.

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. And 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 sound arguments to rationalise an anti-AA stand, thereby alienating many badly needed stable members, would do well to re-evaluate and reconsider the effects of that kind of behaviour. Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual fellowship. Love, tolerance, patience and cooperation are essential if we are to live up to that.

Let's pull together our energies into 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 do it effectively. Let's get on with it in a spirit of NA unity.

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



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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 represents the views of the board at the time of writing.

The World Service Board of Trustees has received many inquiries during the past few years which have asked specific questions about how to go about cooperating without affiliating when it comes to 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 which we all feel as individuals.

It has become clear to us that the phrase “cooperation not affiliation” is no longer suitable for Narcotics Anonymous. Undoubtedly this attitude and these words have served us over many years, but it appears that the growth and development of our fellowship demands a revised expression. In consulting the dictionary, “cooperation” means “the act of working together to a common end or the association of a number of people together in an enterprise, the benefits of which are shared.” This definition can present a problem in addressing our relationship with any other organisation, including NarAnon and Families Anonymous. Strictly speaking, the object or goal of our fellowship is not the same as any other fellowship. In this respect, it is impossible to cooperate without also endorsing or affiliating.

The World Service Board of Trustees believes that a policy, or attitude, or phrase, which serves our purpose best and guides our fellowship well, is “a policy of non-affiliation.” This clearly conveys the fact that we do not associate with, connect with, or adopt any other organisation or purpose. Traditions Six and Ten refer to these issues, and there can never be any formal relationship between Narcotics Anonymous and any other fellowship or organisation.

As individuals, we have tremendous respect for these other fellowships and support the need for them. As grateful recovering addicts, we carry intense and genuine love and understanding in our hearts.

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

We believe that by reflecting back upon our own paths, we can find the way to convey this respect, love, and support, without endorsing or affiliating with other fellowships. 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 and also by simply pursuing our own purpose as guided by the spiritual principles of Narcotics Anonymous. While we all may have our own way of supporting our loved ones, NA can only remain true to our primary purpose

and the guidance provided in Traditions Six and Ten. Consistent fellowship action which is 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. This helps these other fellowships to address their own needs in a sensible, appropriate, and non-dependent manner.

Our relationship as a fellowship with NarAnon and Families Anonymous, as with treatment centres, clubhouses, or any other organisation or enterprise, can then be simply and clearly defined as one of providing information. We provide and will continue to provide information about what we do, where we do it, where our meetings and conventions are held, etc., to anyone who asks for it. At the same time, we avoid any type of affiliation or special treatment for any people or organisation outside of Narcotics Anonymous.

The World Service Board of Trustees believes that many of the practices in which we have engaged as a fellowship run counter to our traditions. The intent of these actions was usually sound, and it has taken many years of experience and study to evaluate them with respect to our Twelve Traditions. These include listing Families Anonymous and NarAnon meetings in NA directories, on flyers for NA conventions, or in NA registration forms, and the practice of obtaining meeting places for these other fellowships at conventions or other NA activities. Additionally, utilising speakers from the NarAnon and Families Anonymous fellowships is a practice which does not adhere to our traditions. However, we encourage phonline workers to use common sense and good judgment in making known to family members that NA is for the drug addict and that family members may find family oriented recovery fellowships to be beneficial.

(Reprinted from Newsline Vol.4, No.6.)



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World Services

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. It represents the views of the board at the time of writing.

The purpose of the World Service Board of Trustees 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, and how different types of NA meetings have different purposes. Awareness of this need for guidance has been sparked by letters and communication from the fellowship at large. This communication has revealed the need of the fellowship to know what Narcotics Anonymous is and how we carry our message.

The population at large is gaining an increased awareness of our fellowship and an increased interest in our meetings. Input which the board of trustees has received highlights examples of confusion that can exist when interested non-addicts or people who are uncertain of their status, 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 if anyone other than an NA member participates. In our meetings, confusion can be created when people such as parents, spouses, therapists, members of other fellowships or other people who are not NA members share and 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 guided well in how we all carry the message of recovery from drug addiction to addicts, as well as to all others who are interested.

For these reasons and in the interest of Narcotics Anonymous, the World Service Board of Trustees recommends the following guidelines and definitions:

1. A Narcotics Anonymous meeting, whether it is open or closed, is an addict sanctuary. It is the one place where a drug addict can go and hear about and participate in recovery from the disease of drug addiction. As much as we might sometimes like, we cannot be all things to all people.
2. An open meeting is an NA meeting which may be attended by anyone interested in recovery from addiction. However, verbal participation is limited to NA members only. An open meeting in Narcotics Anonymous serves several functions. It allows people from outside of the fellowship (for instance, judges, probation officers, professionals, family members) to observe what Narcotics Anonymous is and how it functions. It provides a place for anyone to gain information regarding the disease of drug

addiction and how to find recovery. 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.

3. A closed meeting in Narcotics Anonymous is only for those individuals who are there because of their own drug addiction problem. These meetings do not generally exclude people who are undecided about identifying as an addict; however, participation is still limited to drug addicts only. A closed Narcotics Anonymous meeting provides the freedom which is necessary for a more personal and intimate sharing by Narcotics Anonymous members.

4. Our service structure provides the only appropriate avenues for non-addict participation in Narcotics Anonymous. In addition to recognising the need 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 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 satisfy our recovery and service needs while at the same time meet the needs of non-addicts who are interested in NA.

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



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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. These definitions emphasise such things as physiological dependence, psychological dependence, family dynamics, behavioural problems, and 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.

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?

This is one of those questions about addiction that is difficult to answer. There is much public debate over the question of whether addiction is a disease, and we do not choose to become involved in this debate. However, 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 that 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 number of NA members living in freedom from active addiction shows that this philosophy has worked for us. 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.

This is 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? 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.” Any wording of Step One which named specific drugs -- or drugs at all -- would have stated the principle with much less power than our current wording does.

If we were to broaden our focus beyond drug addiction to include other types of addiction, we believe we would seriously damage the atmosphere of identification in our meetings. The balance we strive 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. On the other hand, we must keep our focus specific enough to provide clear identification for our new members.

Why is our fellowship named after a specific category of drugs, then?

Since it is true that we attempt not to focus on any particular drugs in our meetings, many members have questioned why we are called Narcotics Anonymous. Wouldn't Addicts Anonymous or Drug Addicts Anonymous have been more appropriate title?

The name of our program does seem incongruous with our philosophy and with the varied nature of our membership. In fact, when our fellowship first broke away from Alcoholics Anonymous, we called ourselves “Addicts Anonymous.” Two separate fellowships, both calling themselves “AA” was not such a clean break, though. So our founders chose the name Narcotics Anonymous. At the time, “narcotics” referred to all drug categories, and so “Narcotics Anonymous” was a reasonable choice as the name of our fellowship. The original title, then, did reflect our philosophy of not being focused on a specific drug or drugs. Unfortunately, the word narcotics later became associated with a particular drug category.

As our message is translated into other languages, a dilemma occurs. Sometimes “Narcotics Anonymous” is being translated into “Addicts Anonymous” or “Drug Addicts Anonymous” because the local translating committees understand the philosophy of our program. Other times, a new word is created in a language to preserve a stricter translation of our name. And sometimes “Narcotics Anonymous” is translated literally. What has seemed important to us is that the spirit of the NA message be maintained in these translations and that the program, by message and by name, be recognisable regardless of the language used.

Afterward

The essay is intended to stimulate members' thinking 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.

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 her or him.



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World Services

WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES BULLETIN # 18

Special interest meetings

The following is a report 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. However, please note that this report is offered for informational purposes only, and does not necessarily reflect the position of the WSB itself.

World Service Board of Trustees

The WSC Ad Hoc Committee on Special Interest Meetings was formed by vote of the 1988 World Service Conference. It was moved by the RSR from Colorado and seconded by the RSR from New England "that the WSC chairperson appoint an ad hoc committee composed of RSRs, members of the WSB, and members of the WSC Policy Committee for the purpose of investigating the issue of special interest meetings in NA."

The intent of this motion, as stated in the WSC minutes, was "to help us as a fellowship come to grips with and perhaps [come to] a solution to the issue of special interest meetings. In addition this committee could provide some forum for the input of ideas around the issue."

The committee was composed of fourteen members: John Farrell, the vice chairperson of the World Service Board of Trustees, was appointed chairperson; and Debbie Churchwell, the RSR from Georgia, was appointed vice chairperson. Additional members were Becky Meyer (WSB member), Tim Banner (WSC Policy Committee member), Michael Jones (RSR, Connecticut), Janet Woolley (RSR, London, England), Mary Colangeli-Henning (RSR, Tri-State), Mitchell Soodak (RSR, Greater New York), Linda Cooley (RSR, Chesapeake-Potomac), Tony Dee (RSR, Southern California), Jay Venner (RSR, Florida) and Ed Shepard (RSR, Oregon/Southern Idaho). Other members were Bob Hunter (WSC vice chairperson), Stuart Tooredman (WSO Board of Directors vice chairperson), and Pauli Berri from Germany. Leigh Roberts provided support services from the World Service Office.

The committee met by conference call a number of times: on July 26, 1988; October 20, 1988; February 8, 1989; April 14, 1989; and April 21, 1989. It also met during the WSC workshop held in Dallas, Texas, the weekend of November 11-13, 1988. In addition, the committee conducted an open forum for the receiving of input in Dallas on November 12.

Purpose of the committee

The committee spent a great deal of its initial meeting on July 26, 1988, discussing what it was the conference wanted the committee to accomplish. As a result of this discussion, the committee set the following goals:

1. To provide a definition of special interest meetings.
2. To investigate; that is, “to observe or study by close examination and systematic inquiry” (Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary), precisely what role special interest meetings play in the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship;
3. To allow the fellowship opportunity to comment on this issue by means of conducting open forums; requesting input directly from groups and members via the Newslines, 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 further clarified our task in its discussion of Tradition Four by clearly stating that “a Narcotics Anonymous group is any group that meets regularly, at a specified place and time, for the purpose of recovery, provided that it follows the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous. 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 specialised 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. The regions responding were Arizona, Buckeye, Southern California, Chesapeake-Potomac, Chicagoland, Colorado, Florida, Germany, Greater Illinois, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, London, Lone Star, Michigan, Mid-America, Mid-Atlantic, New Jersey, Show-Me, Sierra Sage, Upper Rocky Mountain, Utah, Volunteer, and Washington/N. Idaho. Here are the results of our survey:

1. Of the twenty-four regions responding, twenty indicated that special interest meetings are held in their regions.
2. 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.
3. 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, one couples meeting, 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 of Narcotics Anonymous there are also meetings for Vietnam Veterans, people with AIDS, people who are HIV positive, and various types of professionals.

4. Of the regions that reported how long special interest meetings have been in existence within their regions, a number of the regions indicated that meetings had been occurring for over five years, and one region reported a group soon to celebrate it's tenth anniversary.

5. 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 from almost its beginning that resolving the issue of special interests 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 do some good. 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 inhibits groups from 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 neither 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. Groups, therefore, exercising their autonomy are best suited to decide whether there is any necessity to have special interest meetings.



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World Services

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 orientation. 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.



Narcotics Anonymous[®]

World Services

NA WORLD SERVICES BULLETIN # 21

The generation of funds (fund raising) and the Seventh Tradition in Narcotics Anonymous

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 commit-

tees 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-centredness. 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 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 fund-raiser. 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 fund-raiser 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-centredness.



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World Services

NA WORLD SERVICES BULLETIN # 22

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.



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World Services

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 recognised 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; ASR’s 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 fellowship wide discussion of the issue, the conference defeated the motion, 27 participants (36%) voting in favour, 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 favour 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 absten-

tions (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 favour 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 favour 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 that 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 organisations, 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; specialised 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 fulfilment 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 specialised 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 specialised 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 organised...”

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 organised 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.



Narcotics Anonymous®

World Services

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 co-workers 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 fulfil our primary purpose, we will need to seek good, cooperative relations with the community around us. We can't fulfil 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 fulfil 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 endeavour; 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 recognising 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 organisations 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 recognising 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 organisations in the community. Finally, we'll touch briefly on the use of service centres in organising 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 emphasised, 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 organisation, or as non-addict friends of the fellowship. More will be said later of special workers, service centres, 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 publicise 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 fulfil 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 publicise NA's solution to addiction throughout the community.

Relations with others

Our non-addict 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 fulfil its primary purpose without the cooperation of others. We do, however, have certain traditions guiding our relations with other organisations, 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 organisations. 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 organisations 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 phonenumber 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 organisations. Some transit companies offer reduced bus bench rates to non-profit endeavours. 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 organisations. In order to maintain its focus, Narcotics Anonymous has established a tradition of neutrality on public issues. We do not take positions as an organisation 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 legalisation 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 have 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 centres

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 centres, staffed by special workers.

"Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional," our Eighth Tradition says, "but our service centres 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 centre might provide that help. For information on the nuts and bolts of opening and operating a community service centre, contact the World Service Office.

Good community relations are vital to the fulfilment 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 organisations 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 publicise.



Narcotics Anonymous[®]

World Services

WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES BULLETIN # 26

A report on the NA literature trust

This article was generated jointly by the World Service Board of Trustees and the WSO Board of Directors in September 1990 in response to the needs of the fellowship. It represents the views of those two boards at the time of its writing.

The substance of NA's recovery message appears in its literature. There's a process that exists to allow that literature to be available to the NA Fellowship. Our adherence to this process assures the consistency of our message.

After a piece of literature is approved by our World Service Conference, it is copyrighted and published by NA's world service corporation, World Service Office, Inc. Once copyrighted, no one may publish NA literature--altered or unaltered--without the permission of WSO, Inc. Not only is this a legal condition, but it also reflects the instructions of the World Service Conference. This copyright protects our printed message, both in English and in translation, from distortion.

From time to time, questions about NA's literature copyrights are asked by members of the fellowship. Questions commonly asked include, What authority has the World Service Conference given to World Service Office, Inc., to protect our copyrights? How were the rights to NA's Basic Text initially transferred to WSO, Inc.? Why has the World Service Conference produced five editions of the Basic Text? Can NA members or groups reprint NA literature? This report serves to answer those questions.

WSO, INC.--NA'S LITERATURE TRUST

Narcotics Anonymous, as we know it today, began in 1953 in Southern California. For many years, the fellowship grew very slowly, and had little organization. In 1971, a membership business meeting at our first world convention decided that the fellowship should open a World Service Office. This office would publish NA literature, and serve as an information clearing house for new groups. At a similar meeting held at our fourth world convention in 1974, officers were elected to a board of directors for this office; these officers were directed to incorporate the WSO. On January 25, 1977, the corporate charter and bylaws were filed with the State of California. The World Service Office became a legal entity.

During the 1982 meeting of the World Service Conference, participants discussed the office's place in the NA service structure. Participants found one article of WSO's bylaws particularly troubling. Though that article clearly stated that WSO, Inc. "operates under the guidelines of the Twelve Traditions," it also asserted that WSO was "fully independent of... the Narcotics Anonymous Society." A motion was passed which directed WSO to amend its bylaws by deleting language that made WSO completely independent from NA, and incorporating in its place the following language:

That the WSO, all members, directors, and officers shall be and are subject to, and will abide by, motions adopted at each WSC meeting and implement decisions reached by the WSC as they pertain to the operation of the WSO. [See Note #1 at the end of this bulletin.]

The 1982 World Service Conference participants also discussed the need to clarify WSO's role in the publication of NA literature. Another recommendation, approved as part of the motion already referred to, stated that "the WSO was legally created to be the publishing arm of Narcotics Anonymous as a means of accurately reproducing the message of recovery. It is appropriate and essential that all publications used by NA be [reproduced] under the direct control of WSO." When approving these and other recommendations affecting WSO's bylaws, the 1982 conference provided that "these changes [be held] in abeyance... [for] a period not to exceed one year. We, [the World Service Conference of Narcotics Anonymous], will at that time vote to reaffirm same."

At the 1983 World Service Conference, the chairperson of the WSO Board of Directors presented participants with revised WSO bylaws. "We at the World Service Office board have voted on these changes," the board chairperson related in his report, "and we would like the approval of the World Service Conference." (See Note #2.) The WSO board chair then proceeded to read aloud every section of the 1982 bylaws which had been revised, referring participants to printed copies of the new bylaws. The conference offered no objection to the revised bylaws.

Section 15.02 of the 1983 bylaws directly addressed some of the 1982 conference's primary concerns:

15.02. All members, Directors and officers of this corporation shall be, and are, subject to, and will abide by, the principals of the "Twelve Traditions" of Narcotics Anonymous Society as set forth in the pamphlet identified and entitled as "Narcotics Anonymous" and shall further abide by, motions adopted, at each WSC meeting and implement decisions reached by the WSC as they pertain to operation of WSO. It is herein specifically acknowledged that WSO acts as a fiduciary [see Note #3] in its dealings with WSC and the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous and that the net proceeds resulting from the sale and distribution of any literature and/or other materials for WSC and the fellowship is received by WSO.

On August 15, 1987, the World Service Office Board of Directors adopted new bylaws. Those new bylaws reflected the intent of 1983's section 15.02, while providing additional detail concerning protection of NA literature and trademarks.

Article 2. Objectives and Purposes.

A specific purpose of the corporation shall be to hold in a fiduciary capacity the rights to, by license agreement from Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office, the use, control, publication and management of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions as adapted by Narcotics Anonymous...

A specific purpose of the corporation shall be to hold in a fiduciary capacity the ownership rights to the control, use, printing, duplicating, sales, distribution, licensing for production, printing, duplicating, sales and use of all of the intellectual properties, logos, trademarks, copyrighted materials, emblems or other intellectual and physical properties of Narcotics Anonymous, the spiritual fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as a whole and such boards and committees of the World Service Conference as may be directed by the World Service Conference.

A specific purpose of the corporation shall be to control and manage the production, printing, manufacturing of the properties of the spiritual fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous and offer said properties for sale to the fellowship and general public...

A specific purpose of the corporation shall be to publish and distribute periodicals written or prepared by and for the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as the corporation may be directed to by the World Service Conference...

The WSO corporate bylaws adopted in 1987 continue in force as of this writing. In accordance with the direction of NA's World Service Conference, the World Service Office corporation holds the copyrights to all NA literature in a charitable trust (see Note #4) on behalf of the entire Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

SUMMARY: GENERAL TRUST FOR NA LITERATURE

In 1971, the NA Fellowship officially designated the World Service Office as its publishing house. In 1974, the fellowship directed the World Service Office to become a corporation. In 1982 and 1983, the World Service Office corporation's role as NA's literary trustee was clarified by the World Service Conference. The corporate bylaws of 1983 reflect the conference's specific intention. They state that "WSO acts as a fiduciary"--that is, someone who is given something, subject to the direction of the party who has given the thing--"in its dealings with WSC and the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous." NA books, pamphlets, and service guides are developed and approved by the World Service Conference. Then, they are given to WSO, Inc., to be published for the fellowship, and to be legally protected on the fellowship's behalf from expropriation or distortion by unauthorised parties, subject to the direction of the World Service Conference.

BASIC TEXT TRUST

As for all NA literature, the copyright for our Basic Text is held in a charitable trust by World Service Office, Inc., which acts at the direction of the World Service Conference. After three years of work by the WSC Literature Committee, the text, formally titled Narcotics Anonymous, was approved by the World Service Conference in May 1982.

On September 15, 1982, the chairman of the World Service Conference Literature Committee executed the following document (see Note #5):

As of September 15, 1982, the World Literature Committee of Narcotics Anonymous, 890 Atlanta Road, Marietta, Ga., 30060, by authorisation of [the] chairman thereof, release in full and turns over all release forms, copy rights, and any and all material contained in pertinent to the Narcotics Anonymous Book and the stories of Narcotics Anonymous Members to be included in the Narcotics Anonymous Book, to the World Service Office of Narcotics Anonymous, Inc., Box 622, Sun Valley, Ca., 91352, ...to be used as directed by the World Service Conference of Narcotics Anonymous in session May 5 through May 9, 1982. [sic]

This document does two things. First, it satisfies the requirement of the United States Copyright Law for transfer of copyright. (See Note #6.) Second, it creates a charitable trust under California law (see Note #7), where the World Service Office is the "trustee," the WSC Literature Committee is the "trustor" or "grantor," and the members-at-large of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous are the "beneficiaries."

This charitable trust, including both its trustee (WSO, Inc.) and its beneficiaries (the members of the NA Fellowship) is subject to the jurisdiction of the Superior Court of the State of California. (See Note #8.) The trust obligations of the WSO have been set forth at the World Service Conference that was held in Santa Monica in May 1982.

BASIC TEXT--FIRST THROUGH FIFTH EDITIONS

Approval form

In November 1981, the approval form of Chapters One through Ten of the Basic Text were released to the fellowship. In February 1982, the approval form of forty-seven personal stories intended for publication in the Basic Text were released to the fellowship. At the May 1982 meeting of NA's World Service Conference, the entire Basic Text was approved. (See Notes #9, #10.)

First Edition

Having no experience in publishing a full-length book, publication of the First Edition was a very difficult job for the World Service Office. In addition to major problems with the printer initially chosen to publish the book, conceptual problems arose. In the course of preparing the approval-form book for publication, it was noted that portions of the essays on Traditions Four and Nine made it appear that the NA service structure should not be considered a part of Narcotics Anonymous. The following are the two paragraphs in question; note especially the italicised text.

From the essay on Tradition Four: “Are we truly autonomous? What about our service committees, our offices, activities, hot-lines, and all the other things that go on in NA? The answer is that these things are not NA. They are services we utilise to help us in our recovery and to further the primary purpose of our groups. Narcotics Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women, addicts meeting in groups and using a given set of spiritual principles to find freedom from addiction and a new way to live. All else is not NA. Those things we mentioned are the result of members caring enough to reach out and offer their help and experience so that our road might be easier. Whether we choose to utilise these services is up to the group.”

From the essay on Tradition Nine: “The Ninth Tradition goes on to define the nature of the things that we can do to help NA. It says that we may create service boards or committees to serve the needs of the Fellowship. None of them has the power to rule, censor, decide, or dictate. They exist solely to serve the Fellowship, but they are not a part of Narcotics Anonymous. This is the nature of our service structure as it has evolved and been defined in the NA service manual.”

After much discussion, the WSO Board of Directors and the World Service Board of Trustees agreed that the portions appearing above in italics should be removed from the book before publication of the First Edition. In response, the chairperson of the WSC Literature Committee attempted to revoke the earlier release of rights to the Basic Text. However, when the World Service Conference met in May 1983, no motion was made to uphold the literature chairperson’s action. On the contrary, new WSO bylaws were accepted, clearly stating that NA literature should be held in a charitable trust by the corporation. The WSO-copyrighted First Edition was officially released on April 27, 1983 by the World Service Office, using the fictitious business name of CARENA Publishing Company.

Second Edition

Conference minutes of 1983 reflect that an amended motion was passed, directing “that our book be completely returned to its [original] approved form in subsequent printings.” (See Notes #11, #12.) The Second Edition of the Basic Text was released on September 28, 1983, with the missing lines re inserted. The copyright holder was again listed as CARENA Publishing Co., a fictitious business name of World Service Office, Inc.

Third Edition

One year after the conference directed WSO to re insert the missing lines, the WSC decided that the issue should ultimately be settled directly by the membership of Narcotics Anonymous. In 1984, regional service representatives were asked to poll their groups on the following question: Should the wording of the essays on the Fourth and Ninth Traditions be as reflected in both the original approval form and the Second Edition, or as reflected in the First Edition? Their responses were to be mailed to the conference chairperson within sixty days of the end of the conference, and prior to the printing of any more books by the World Service Office. A change from the language of the Second Edition was to require a two-thirds vote. The results were to be published in the Newslines. (See Note #13.)

The question was submitted to the fellowship in a seven-page document which included the proposed changes, plus the reasons both for making the change and for keeping the text as approved. The response was thirty-six votes in favour of changing the text, and eight against changing the text. Therefore, at the next printing, the Third Edition, the words originally deleted in the First Edition were again deleted, this time in response to a direct vote of the fellowship. The Third Edition was formally

released on October 20, 1984.

Editing ordered which ultimately resulted in Fourth Edition

On May 3, 1985, the WSC approved a motion “that the WSO be instructed to have the Basic Text professionally edited to ensure consistent and correct use of capitalisation, verb tenses, gender, singular/plural endings, and other grammatical errors and that the edited text be returned to the Literature

Review Committee [at the time, a division of the WSC Literature Committee] for acceptance and approval prior to printing and distribution.” (See Note #14.)

One RSR suggested that, once the edit was completed, the text should be sent out for a fellowship wide review prior to publication. The conference engaged in heated discussion of this suggestion. However, because the required editing would affect only matters of grammar, not conceptual issues, the discussion ended with the WSC strongly in favour of allowing publication of the edited text after review only by the Literature Review Committee. (See Note #15.)

Work on the editing project was begun late in 1985, but was not completed before the 1986 annual meeting of the World Service Conference.

Third Edition, Revised

At the 1986 WSC meeting, a substantially revised version of NA’s Little White Booklet, developed by the World Service Board of Trustees, was approved by the conference. (See Note #16.) The motion to approve the revised White Booklet stated specifically that the Basic Text should also be revised to reflect the changes in the White Booklet. The revised text, known as the Third Edition, Revised, was released in November 1986.

Fourth Edition

While the Third Edition, Revised, was being put into production, the edit mandated by the WSC in 1985 continued. The editor, working from a typescript of the Third Edition, completed his work in mid-1986. On July 30, 1986, the WSC Literature Committee chairperson mailed the edited version to members of the Literature Review Committee. The edit was approved by the Literature Review Committee at its October 1986 meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The original 1985 motion that mandated the editing of the Basic Text required only that the Literature Review Committee approve the edit prior to publication of the Fourth Edition. The conference had not asked the WSC Literature Committee to return the edited book to the World Service Conference, nor had the WSC directed the committee to send the edited text out for fellowship wide review prior to publication.

However, in the November 1986 Fellowship Report, the committee chairperson wrote, “During the course of their review, the Literature Review Committee came across six sentences which are... inconsistent with the Newly Revised White Book,” approved by the WSC in April 1986. Those six sentences were not found in the portions of the Basic Text drawn directly from the White Booklet. However, they conflicted with the conceptual spirit behind the changes that had been made in the booklet.

Literature Review Committee minutes relate that the committee “was in favour of making these additional changes, however, the Literature Review Committee decided to request a broader group conscience by referring the matter to the World Service Office Board of Directors and the Board of Trustees. The Literature Review Committee had decided that if the Board of Directors and the Board of Trustees were also unanimously in agreement, the Fourth Edition would then be printed.”

Following discussions with the directors and trustees, a decision was made to defer publication of the Fourth Edition until the World Service Conference could consider the additional changes necessary to bring the text in line with the revised White Booklet. On April 28, 1987, in his report at the World

Service Conference annual meeting, the WSC Literature Committee chairperson stated that, “pending Conference action on the white book consistency motion... the World Service Office will be able to proceed with the printing of the Fourth Edition.” (See Note #17.) On April 29, the World Service Conference voted to make the five suggested changes in Book One of the Basic Text, but did not approve the sixth change, which would have altered one of the personal stories in Book Two. (See Note #18.)

The edited Basic Text, incorporating the 1986 revision of the Little White Booklet and the five changes authorised in 1987 by the World Service Conference, was published as the Fourth Edition on October 27, 1987, two and a half years after the original motion to edit the Basic Text was passed by the World Service Conference.

Fifth Edition

The edited Fourth Edition text differed significantly from both the Third Edition and the Third Edition, Revised. This was due partly to the editing (which was intentional), and partly to a series of WSO production errors (which were unintentional). When the typescript of the Third Edition, from which the Fourth Edition editor worked, was created, the transcriptionist skipped a number of lines of text at a time, in twenty-five separate locations throughout the book. At no time prior to publication of the Fourth Edition was the editor’s typescript proofread against the published Third Edition text; hence, the original transcription errors went unchecked.

Early in the winter of 1988, the World Service Office and the WSC Literature Committee began hearing complaints about the differences between the Third Edition, Revised, and the Fourth Edition. Early in April 1988, the entire WSO staff was diverted from its routine work to conduct three separate rounds of line-by-line comparisons between the Third Edition, the Fourth Edition editor’s typescript, and the published Fourth Edition.

The findings of the WSO staff were reported in full to the World Service Conference. Following a meeting of the conference as a committee of the whole to discuss a variety of possible remedies, the WSC approved a motion to re insert the missing lines from the Third Edition back into the Basic Text. In the meantime, “the Fourth Edition, with current errors, [was to] continue to be sold as Conference-approved literature until such time as the corrected Fifth Edition [was] ready.” The conference passed an amendment to the motion which specified that the resulting Fifth Edition could not be revised any further for five years. (See Note #19.)

In the course of considering the motion which created the Fifth Edition, an amendment was proposed which would have specified that “this motion would be acted upon following a special ballot sent to RSCs.... The RSCs would be requested to reply in 30-60 days.... Intent: To collect a Fellowship-wide group conscience and unify this Fellowship [behind the] WSC decision.” So great was the desire to put the Fourth Edition controversy in the past, the conference voted not to even consider this amendment. (See Note #20.)

Immediately following the passage of the motion creating the Fifth Edition, the conference considered and defeated two additional motions. Both were very similar in language, the major difference being that the second stated its intent. The motions sought to direct the World Service Office to publish the Third Edition, Revised, rather than the corrected Fourth Edition (or, as it was known, the Fifth Edition).

The second motion read: “That the World Service Conference direct the World Service Office to immediately cease the publication and sale of the fourth edition of our Basic Text, Narcotics Anonymous, and immediately begin publication and sale of the third edition revised of our Basic Text, Narcotics Anonymous. Intent: To prevent the sale of unapproved literature by the WSO. The editing of our Basic Text and subsequent approval by the LRC so far exceeded any reasonable interpretation of the authority granted by the motion to edit the Basic Text as to require that the fourth edition be treated as new literature, and as such, be subject to the standard review and approval process.” Both motions were defeated by overwhelming majorities. (See Note #21.)

SUMMARY: THE BASIC TEXT CHARITABLE TRUST

In 1982, trust rights to the Basic Text were given unconditionally to World Service Office, Inc., to be held by the corporation in a charitable trust on behalf of the NA Fellowship, subject to the direction of the World Service Conference. Though a challenge to that trust was raised by the WSC Literature Committee chairperson early in 1983, that challenge was not placed on the agenda of the 1983 meeting of the World Service Conference, and fell moot. Successive editions have been created as the direct result of action taken by the World Service Conference to revise the original version. Those editions have also been copyrighted by the World Service Office Corporation, and the Basic Text continues to be held in a charitable trust by the corporation on behalf of the members of the NA Fellowship.

CAN NA MEMBERS OR GROUPS REPRINT NA LITERATURE?

The most commonly asked question is whether members or groups of members of the fellowship at large have the right to translate, edit, and reprint the Basic Text or other NA literature on their own. The answer is “no.” First of all, NA literature, including the Basic Text, is the copyrighted property of World Service Office, Inc. Under United States copyright law, only the World Service Office has the right to reproduce, translate, or prepare new versions of NA literature. (See Note #22.) Because of the international copyright protection afforded by the Berne Copyright Convention, the World Service Office has the same rights in eighty other countries around the world. (See Note #23.)

The World Service Office Corporation holds these copyrights in trust on behalf of the NA Fellowship, subject to the direction of the World Service Conference. To date, the World Service Conference has not directed the World Service Office to grant permission either to individual members or groups of members of the fellowship at large who request to reproduce the text. (See Note #24.) In fact, the most recent directive from the World Service Conference has been that the World Service Office was to prosecute a party which had infringed the fellowship’s rights. In 1989, a trustee from Philadelphia “requested that the Conference give general consent to the WSO Executive Director and its Board of Directors to proceed with the legal matter relating to the illegal production of NA materials or any extra legal matter relating to the situation, as they see fit. [The request was] approved by unanimous consent.” (See Note #25.) While the consent given by the conference in this instance related to one particular case at hand, it also established a precedent for the kind of principles to be applied in similar cases.

If the members of the fellowship feel that their rights are being violated by the “trustee” WSO, they have the right to request that the protector of charitable trusts in California, the California Attorney General, investigate and, if appropriate, file an action to prevent the misuse of trust property. They cannot resort to simply taking the property and using it themselves. In fact, WSO has an affirmative duty to take steps that will stop actions that will result in a loss to the trust. (See Note #26.)

Therefore, under United States copyright law, only the World Service Office has the right to reproduce the Basic Text or prepare new versions of the Basic Text. (See Note #27.) The fact that the copyrights may be held in trust does not affect the legal right and responsibility of WSO to enforce the copyrights on behalf of the fellowship.

NOTES

- 1 Minutes, WSC’ 82, pp. 59-64. The published minutes of the 1982 meeting of the World Service Conference do not bear printed page numbers. For the purpose of these references, page numbers in the WSC’ 82 minutes have been counted from the first page of recorded proceedings. That page bears the legend, “Wednesday evening, May 5, 1982,” at the top. In counting page numbers, blank pages within the body of the published minutes were also counted.

- 2 From a transcript of WSC' 83 proceedings.
- 3 Fiduciary, as defined in the 1971 edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (Unabridged Version):
“In Rom. Law fiducia denoted the transfer of a right to a person subject to the obligation to transfer it again at some future time or on some condition being fulfilled. Adj.
“1b. Of or pertaining to a trustee; pertaining to or of the nature of a trusteeship.
“2a. Of a thing: In trust of a person; held or given in trust.
“2b. Of or pertaining to something held in trust.
“Cf. fiducial, f. fiducia trust, confidence.
“1. Theol. Of or pertaining to, or of the nature of, trust or reliance.”
- 4 Restatement of Trusts, 2d, Sec.s 348, 349.
- 5 This document is on file at the WSO and bears a notary's seal adjacent to the signature.
- 6 17 U.S. Code, Sec. 204[a].
- 7 California Probate Code, Sec. 15200 (b) and/or (e).
- 8 California Probate Code, Sec. 17003, 17004.
- 9 Record of the approval of the first ten chapters of the Basic Text appears in the minutes of WSC'82, pp. 65-67. The stories were approved separately.
- 10 Record of the approval of various personal stories for publication in the Basic Text appears on page 4 of the corrections to the minutes of WSC' 82, published as an addendum to the minutes of WSC'83.
- 11 Minutes, WSC'83, pp. 14-15. The amended motion carried 24 in favour, 15 against, 5 abstaining.
- 12 A later motion gave “a [vote] of confidence to WSO and WSB by approving the basic text with changes suggested by WSB and carried out by WSO as NA approved literature.” The motion carried 23 in favour, 0 against, 9 abstaining. (Minutes, WSC'83, p. 36.) According to the maker, this motion was made to insure that the First Edition would be considered conference-approved literature and, thus, appropriate for use in NA meetings.
- 13 Revised minutes, WSC'84, pp. 32 and 33.
- 14 Minutes, WSC'85, p. 36. The motion carried 47 in favour, 1 against, 3 abstaining.
- 15 From a transcript of WSC'85 proceedings.
- 16 Minutes, WSC'86, pp. 12-17, and pp. 37-38.
- 17 Report of the WSC Literature Committee to the 1987 World Service Conference, April 28, 1987, page 6.
- 18 Minutes, WSC'87, pp. 20-21. The motion to make the five proposed changes in Book One carried 64 in favour, 4 against, 5 abstaining. The motion to make the single change in Book Two was defeated for lack of a two-thirds majority, with 34 in favour, 25 against, 12 abstaining.

19 Minutes, WSC'88, pp. 17-20. On a roll call vote, the amended motion carried, 56 in favour, 12 against, 8 abstaining.

20 Minutes, WSC'88, p. 19. The motion to object to consideration was carried, 49 in favour, 18 against, 7 abstentions.

21 Minutes, WSC'88, p. 20. The first motion was defeated, 4 in favour, 51 against, 8 abstaining; the second was defeated, 5 in favour, 60 against, 6 abstaining.

22 17 U.S. Code, Sec. 106.

23 The Berne Convention (Paris Text, July 24, 1971), Article 5, Paragraph 1, reads, "Authors shall enjoy, in respect of works for which they are protected under this Convention, in countries of the Union other than the country of origin, the rights which their respective laws do now or may hereafter grant to their nationals, as well as the rights specially granted by this Convention."

24 It is true that, in the past, the World Service Conference has given assent to license agreements between the WSO and the boards of four national service offices, allowing those national offices to reprint White Booklets and information pamphlets for distribution only in their own countries. Those agreements were made to make NA literature more readily available in Europe and the South Pacific at a time when the WSO was less prepared to distribute literature to those parts of the world than it is now. Those license agreements are not currently in force, were never signed, and only certain sections have ever been implemented.

However, it is important to note that those agreements were made with national service offices outside the United States--not with individuals or groups of members, nor with any American service board--to provide for the distribution of NA literature in territory the WSO itself could not serve at the time the agreements were made.

25 Minutes, WSC'89, p. 25.

26 California Probate Code, Sec.s 16010, 16011 (Deering 1990).

27 17 U.S. Code, Sec. 106.



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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-centredness, denial, rationalisation, 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 centred 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 hospitalised 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.



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WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES BULLETIN # 28

Freedom From Prejudice

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-centredness, 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 colour, 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-centredness removed, and do together that which we cannot do alone.



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World Services

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. 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.



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World Services

NA WORLD SERVICES BULLETIN # 30

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 reac-

tion 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.



Narcotics Anonymous[®]

World Services

NA WORLD SERVICES BULLETIN # 31

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 behaviour, 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 behaviour.

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 “cross-talking” 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.