



Meeting attendance cards (CHITS)

THE SUGGESTIONS OFFERED HERE ARE MERELY INTENDED TO AID GROUPS IN THEIR DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES.

THE GROUP IS THE FINAL AUTHORITY IN THIS MATTER: IT IS FOR EACH GROUP TO DECIDE WHETHER IT WISHES TO BE COURT CARD FRIENDLY

BACKGROUND

In some areas of the UK probation services operate a court card or chit system to give case managers some evidence of an offender's attendance at 12-Step recovery meetings, for example where these form part of a Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO). In accordance with our Traditions and with NA World Services suggested policy, and in the light of the positive experience of both AA and NA around the world, that NA in the UK cooperate by offering a way for people to pick up dated and coded 'chits' from meetings to prove attendance.

We certainly don't endorse the judicial approach to drug addiction, it is NA policy to cooperate with (thought not affiliate with) the professional community and in particular to provide information about what Narcotics Anonymous is and what we offer. (If it helps, Public Information presentations can be given to the local facility – just ask your area PI committee.)

The aim of this paper is to help equip groups and members to have an informed discussion about whether they wish their group to offer cooperation to such a facility and if they decide to become court card friendly, to handle the system and welcome the additional newcomers without being overburdened.

We suggest distributing this document to everyone who wants to be involved in your decision about whether to become court card friendly. And we ask all considering the issue to bear the following in mind:

- Our literature clearly states that it is not our place to judge the desire of anyone to stop using.
- The primary goal of NA is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers, so it is important to make people feel welcome at their first meeting.
- Cooperation with agencies strongly fosters goodwill towards NA, helps carry the message to their clients (still-suffering addicts), and makes it more likely that they will encourage people to attend our meetings.

Here are some frequently asked questions about the chit system.

Q. Does the signing of a meeting attendance card conflict with the guidance expressed in Traditions Six and Ten?

A. The groups simply provide verification of attendance without consideration of why verification is requested. We do not report on the member's behaviour / participation / recovery exhibited in the meeting and as such do not endorse or affiliate with the requesting agency.

Q. Do we allow people who don't express the desire to stop using into meetings (and do we let them share)?

A. Clearly, the Fourth Tradition leaves the final decision to each group as to whether or not to accommodate court cards. We ask that in making your decision you consider 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, p.120.) 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. Ultimately people's desire to stay in NA will depend on whether or not they want to stop using.

Q. What do we do if the influx of newcomers with meeting cards is overwhelming / makes it difficult to maintain the atmosphere of recovery?

A. We suggest that you seek help from your Area Service Committee. The ASC can help determine which groups are best able to accommodate a large influx of newcomers and provide (or ask for) guidance to those that decide to become court card friendly. We suggest preparing an area meeting list to show which groups will sign the cards and which will not; your area PI committee will then send this to local agencies. Cooperation among the groups within an area, and between the area and referral agencies, will help maintain the atmosphere of recovery in each group.

Q. Could the anonymity of the person signing the card be threatened and/or could the signer be asked to testify in court about the signature?

A1. Options that would help avoid this situation are: for the secretary, GSR, trusted servant or member to write the name, date and time of the meeting and sign his or her first name and last initial; or the group could have a stamp made and simply stamp the card so that no one individual needs to sign it; or a group business card could be printed with the name of the group, the time it meets etc, and dated each week so that anyone who needs to verify their meeting attendance on that date simply takes a card from the table.

A2. Your area public information (PI) subcommittee could contact the referral source director, explain the dilemma and agree a mutually acceptable solution.

A3. You could consider starting a new meeting at the facility (Probation service office).

Q. What if we decide not to be court card friendly and people turn up with cards asking for them to be signed?

A. We request that you do not tell people with cards that they are not welcome at the meeting. By all means explain that you do not offer the service of signing the cards; most importantly, find out who sent the people along then contact your area PI committee and ask them to contact the agency concerned so that they can be redirected to a court card friendly meeting.



RUNNING A COURT CARD SYSTEM IN AN NA GROUP

The following are options and some may conflict with one another; it is up to each group to decide how it wants to operate. Members are asked to bear in mind that it is vital that court card friendly groups manage this system well to avoid NA falling into disrepute, in which case the affected agency may stop referring addicts to NA and potential members may die without having heard our message.

Options for verifying attendance

- The secretary, group service rep, trusted servant or NA member writes name, date, and time of the meeting and signs only his or her first name and last initial.
- The group has a group stamp made and simply stamps the card so that no one individual needs to sign it.
- The group's business card listing the name and time of the group is dated and placed on the literature table and can be picked up by anyone who needs to verify meeting attendance on that date.
- The group assigns responsibility to a trusted servant. This trusted servant should be held accountable to maintain the smooth running of the system.
- The date is written on the sealed back of the envelope (provide by Probation Services) before the chits are handed out.

Meeting format options

- Incorporate an announcement in your preamble such as "This is a chit friendly group and anyone who requires a chit please ask [trusted servant] at the end of the meeting".
- Incorporate a request in the preamble that people new to Narcotics Anonymous respect the group by not being disruptive.
- Make it clear in the preamble that everyone is welcome, but group rules exist so that recovery will be available for newcomers and old-timers alike.
- The appointed trusted servant / secretary hold the chits and hands them out to potential members who attend the groups recovery meeting.
- The meeting format indicates clearly that in order to minimize any disruption to the recovery meeting, meeting attendance cards (CHITS) are collected at the beginning of the meeting and can be retrieved at the end.
- The designated member signs, stamps or passes out the cards off to the side thus avoiding the need to actually collect and redistribute them.
- Say in your meeting format that in order to minimise any disruption, meeting attendance cards are collected at the beginning of the meeting and can be retrieved at the end.
- Processed the cards either at the beginning or at the end of the meeting.
- The trusted servant or group member signs or stamps the chit at his / her convenience.

We do suggest that you 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. (That is chit friendly).

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