Central Sierra Area Narcotics Anonymous

Public Relations
(P.R.)
Orientation Information Packet

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WHAT IS P.R.?

P.R. is a Committee in Narcotics Anonymous which carries the message of recovery to addicts who do not have easy access to N.A meetings.

The P.R. Committee is a group of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with others in hospitals and institutions. People who do P.R. firmly believe that no addict seeking recovery need die without having had the chance to find a better way of life.

Many people are under the misconception that they have little or nothing to offer in P.R. if they have not been in a similar facility themselves. It is not important whether or not we have been in a similar facility. Anyone with a clear and consistent N.A. message who is willing to share, is well suited for P.R. work. Once you have attended a P.R. Orientation, you may participate on a panel. Our experience is that men work with men and women work with women most effectively.

PURPOSE OF ATTENDING AN ORIENTATION

P.R. meetings provide the first exposure to recovery in Narcotics Anonymous for many addicts. It is very important that we carry a clear and consistent message of Narcotics Anonymous recovery and project a positive image of the fellowship. P.R. experiences some problems, most of them due to members not being informed. It is in the best interest of N.A that we provide an Orientation. An Orientation will allow N.A members a chance to become familiar with P.R. work so that they are not rushed into it without any preparation. In order to form a clear understanding of a P.R. presentation, it is important to know where it fits in our service structure. Rather than being an N.A group which may be represented at the Area Service Committee (ASC) by a Group Service Representative (GSR), a P.R. presentation is a service provided by the ASC through its P.R. subcommittee.

P.R. differs from meetings, and an Orientation will give the new volunteer an understanding of our policies and explain why we must follow not only our own guidelines, but those of the facilities. It is

very important to remember that when we participate in P.R. meetings, we are seen as a representative of Narcotics Anonymous. The fellowship as a whole may be judged on how we conduct ourselves.

PERSONAL COMMITMENT

COMMITMENT TO P.R.

Commitment means many different things to many different people. Some definitions may include these simple words: duty, dedication, promise, devotion, obligation, responsibility and guarantee. The principle of commitment is one that has been taught to us by the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. P.R. work requires that we as individuals practice this principle faithfully.

Often times a P.R. presentation provides the first exposure to recovery in N.A. for many addicts. Our panels may also be the only contact that these addicts receive with our program on a weekly basis. It is important that we realize that the suffering addict in the facilities may depend on us for the only message of recovery that they get. For this reason, we ask that you not volunteer for P.R. if you are not sure you will be able to attend. If you do volunteer, make sure that you fulfill your commitment. None of us as individuals has the right to cancel P.R.

The consequences of choosing not to attend and fulfill our commitments are that we let down the addict who still suffers, the facilities that house them, the reputation of NA., and our own personal program of recovery. Remember that the "purpose of a P.R. Subcommittee is to carry the N.A. message of recovery to addicts who do not have full access to Narcotics Anonymous meetings." When we drop the ball and do not fulfill our commitment, we send a complete opposite message to both the addict and the facility. This message is one of indifference. The message conveyed is that NA does not care! By not attending, we do our personal programs great harm by living in the self-centered nature of our disease. It may take years to overcome this choice.

COMMITMENT TO THE LANGUAGE OF RECOVERY

Commitment to the language of recovery in our meetings is also an important issue. In order to remain consistent with our traditions, and to insure that the message we carry is a clear consistent message of recovery in N.A., we refer to ourselves simply as "addicts." Not "drug addicts," not "addicts and alcoholics," not "dually addicted," not "junkies" or "dope fiends," but just as "addicts!" We refer to our time in the Program as "clean," "clean time" or "recovery." Not "sobriety," not "clean and sober," just "clean," "clean time" or "recovery!" A mixed message is a confusing message. If this is something that you feel you can not do, then maybe you are not suited for P.R. service in N.A

COMMITMENT TO REPRESENT N.A.

As P.R. volunteers, we must remember that when we attend a P.R. meeting, we are viewed as examples or representatives of N.A. The Fellowship as a whole may be judged on how we conduct ourselves. Common courtesy is essential! Therefore, we should arrive to the facility early. We should start and end the meeting on time. We should respect the dress code of the facility as well as recommendations made in the P.R. handbook and our Area's Orientation. We should treat everyone we meet: staff, patients, inmates and guests with respect. Our actions in these facilities will reflect on N.A. as a whole and will also carry a message of recovery.

COMMITMENT TO THE SUB-COMMI'ITEE

The P.R. Sub-committee in our Area can be a very effective tool when we all help. One of the reasons it exists is to keep an open line of communication between N.A. as a whole and the facilities. More importantly, at the Sub-committee, we can share our experience, strength and hope and help each other to get through problems we may encounter in carrying the message. This will allow us to prosper. Without our members, from the Panel Member on up, attending the Sub-committee meetings, the message of N.A. is lost and the Sub-committee loses its effectiveness. All of the Steps of N.A. include "we" for a big reason. Together we can do a great job; but when individuals try to carry the load of the P.R. Sub-committee, the downward spiral begins.

COMMITMENT TO SERVICE

The Basic Text of N.A. tells us that "Good will is best exemplified in service: proper service is doing the right thing for the right reason. When good will supports and motivates both the individual and the Fellowship, we are fully whole and wholly free." Proper service is a cornerstone of our personal programs. When we apply this principle of commitment to our lives, it is our experience that we grow spiritually, emotionally and mentally. Sometimes we may feel that our work in P.R. is futile; that it just is not working. However, that will change when you are sitting in a meeting some day and an addict comes rushing up to meet you and to say thank you for bringing them the message. If we can touch one life with our panels then we have done our jobs. Above and beyond we "keep what we have by giving it away." P.R. service will help keep us clean.

P.R. PRESENTATION

It is important to remember that in a P.R. meeting, we are not there to dump our problems; but rather to help addicts become aware of what N.A. is, and how it works in our lives.

VARIETY OF FORMATS

SHORT TERM - It is suggested to concentrate on introducing the attendees to N.A. Explain about how it works, the tools we've leaned on to support us in our recovery, meeting schedules, etc. Examples of short term facilities are: detox centers, twenty-eight day facilities, and out-patient facilities.

LONG TERM - The object here is to try to get more participation from the residents. Conduct meetings similar to outside meetings (within guidelines) such as topic discussion meetings, step or book studies. Examples of long term facilities are: recovery houses, therapeutic communities, halfway houses, 3/4 houses, psychiatric hospitals, correctional facilities.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

It is a good idea to encourage questions concerning what was presented at the meeting or other general questions about N.A., but there are a few things that you need to keep in mind. Please remember that N.A. has no opinion on outside issues. Occasionally during the question and answer period, or when talking after the presentation, the residents will ask us to give an opinion on outside issues such as:

″Other recovery programs or Fellowships:

"I'm an alcoholic."

″The Facility i.e.

"Do I need to stay in treatment?"

"They are giving me drugs, am I clean?"

"What do you think about a halfway house?"

″ Many other issues that do not pertain to recovery from addiction in Narcotics Anonymous

<u>It is very important that we are not drawn into these types of discussions!! Always remember to only share your experience, strength and hope about your recovery in Narcotics Anonymous</u>.

STAFF INTERACTION

Our relation with the staff of the facility is important for the continued success of the P.R. presentation. Although the staff designated contact person maybe on the administrative level, our week-to-week interaction will most likely be with the other staff. It is important that we establish a rapport with these staff members that will make it much easier to deal with any difficulties that may come up. This positive relationship will facilitate everything from making sure that there is a table to put the literature on, to handling a resident who has a seizure during the presentation.

At some P.R. presentations, a staff person may be expected to attend. We should make it clear not only at the initial stage of setting up the meeting, but also on an ongoing basis that their role will be as an observer only. This also applies if the staff member happens to be a member of N.A. While this

person is functioning as an employee of the facility, they would not be able to share about N.A. without the

residents becoming confused about N.A.'s relationship with that facility. This is in keeping with our traditions concerning non-professionalism and non-affiliation (Traditions 8 and 6).

SUGGESTED TOPICS

- **Any I.P. selection from the Basic Text.**
- **Honesty, Open mindedness and Willingness**
- **Surrender**
- **Acceptance**
- **The Basics (Don't use, meetings, phone numbers, literature, sponsor, and the steps)**
- **H.A.L.T.S. (Don't get too: Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired, Serious)**
- **Responsibility for our own Recovery**
- **Freedom from Active Addiction**
- **Identify Rather than Compare**
- **Spiritual not Religious Program**
- **Going to any Lengths**
- **Transition to the Fellowship after Treatment**
- **Tools of the Fellowship**
- **Letting go**
- **Feelings**
- **Learning to Trust**
- **Giving up old Playmates, Playgrounds and Playthings**
- **Living Just for Today**
- **The First Three Steps**
- **Denial**
- **Reservations**

" **Sponsorship**

DO'S AND DON'TS

P.R. SERVICE - DO'S

- **Everyone going in must have an awareness of facility rules.**
- **Obey all dress codes. Dress appropriately, no tee shirts with writing.**
- **Keep staff aware of your whereabouts at all times.**
- **Make directories of outside meetings available to residents.**
- **Use literature recommended for P.R. work according to type of facility where meeting/presentation is held.**
- **Stamp all literature with Helpline number and Regional/Area address.**
- **Start and end meeting on time.**
- **Carry a clear N.A. message.**
- **Screen all P.R. participants (Panel Members, Chairpersons, Speakers, etc.) especially regarding clean time requirements of facility and the P.R. Subcommittee.**
- **Explain briefly what P.R. is.**
- **Try to get residents involved, especially those in long term facilities (literature person, readings, coffee maker, etc.)**
- **Emphasize the importance of attending an N.A. meeting on the first day out.**
- **Emphasize that in N.A., recovery is available to any addict, regardless of type of drug(s) used.**
- **Always remember to share only your experience, strength and hope about your recovery in N.A. We have no opinion on outside issues.**

- **Be selective about who you choose to take into P.R. meetings. People who sit on P.R. panels should be able to share a message of recovery in N.A.**
- **Inform contact person we have literature order forms available.**

P.R. SERVICE - DON'TS

- **Break another person's anonymity or tell his or her story.**
- **Debate drugs are acceptable - N.A. is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs.**
- **Give or accept gifts.**
- **Show favoritism to any inmate or resident.**
- **Carry excessive cash or wear expensive or flashy jewelry.**
- **Carry in any contraband items (drugs, weapons, guns, cigarettes-if applicable).**
- **Collect any money.**
- **Give inmates or residents money.**
- **Give out your or any other person's address or phone number.**
- **Discuss conditions in the facility or opinions about staff members.**
- **Debate any issues involving the facility's rules or regulations.**
- **Take messages or letters in or out of the facility.**
- **Break inmates' or residents' anonymity.**
- ****Wear clothes with any message or writing on them.****

ADOLESCENT FACILITIES - DO'S

- **Remember that this is a "we" program. No addict should feel that he/she is being preached to.**
- **Remember that an addict is an addict regardless of age.**
- **Tell them that there is fun in recovery, (i.e. social events, fellowship, etc.).**
- **Acknowledge and validate their feelings and emotions.**
- **Acknowledge and validate their clean time.**

ADOLESCENT FACILITIES – DON'TS

- **Glorify your past.**
- **Say, "I feel like I'm talking to my kids."**

- **Compare your bottom to theirs.**
- **Patronize adolescents.**
- **Use profanity.**

TREATMENT CENTERS - DO'S

- **Make it clear that N.A. is separate and distinct from the facility as well as other Fellowships.**
- **Explain the language that we use (addict, clean, recovery) and why we use it (1st Step and 6th Tradition of N.A).**
- **Emphasize the importance of getting a sponsor and a home group, the ongoing nature of recovery and the importance of attending meetings (suggest 90 in 90).**
- **Focus on the positive and unique qualities of our program. Keep your Basic Text handy and read from it. It is the foundation of our Program recovery.**

TREATMENT CENTERS – DON'TS

- **Debate the merits of the treatment center's program or other Fellowships.**
- **Comment on the methods used by the treatment facility. Not all facilities are 12-Step based, nor do their understandings of the Steps necessarily coincide with the understanding gained in N.A. We share our experience without reference to the facility's methods or to the resident's comments.**
- **While sharing, put too much emphasis on what it was like; they already know.**
- **Rely on flooding a treatment center with literature to carry our message. The most powerful tool for carrying our message is the N.A. member.**
- **Read too many literature selections at the beginning of the meeting. Keep it short and simple to keep their attention.**
- **Let the meeting run too long. Most treatment center residents spend much of their day in meetings of one sort or another, often in the same room.**

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES - DO'S

- **Follow all security regulations at all times.**
- **Take out what you bring in (keys, pens, jackets, etc.)**

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES – DON'TS

- **Get involved in discussion about an inmate's guilt or innocence.**
- **Chew gum or carry any unnecessary items.**