

**Narcotics
Anonymous**
World Services

PR BASICS

Public Relations Statement

Why Public Relations Is Important to the NA Member

The Narcotics Anonymous message is “that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use and find a new way to live.” Our relations with the public enable us to share this message broadly so that those who might benefit from our program of recovery can find us. We perform public relations service to increase the awareness and credibility of the NA program. We share our message openly with the public at large, with prospective members, and with professionals. Maintaining an open, attractive attitude in these efforts helps us to create and improve relationships with those outside the fellowship. Establishing and maintaining a commitment to these relationships, can help us to further our primary purpose.

The spiritual principles of our steps, traditions, and concepts guide us in pursuing our public relations aims and our efforts to enhance NA’s public image and reputation. These principles apply to our community and service efforts as well as to the personal behavior and attitude of individual NA members.

Informing Professionals and the Public

The following statement can be used to inform the public about NA:

Narcotics Anonymous is a global, community-based organization with a multi-lingual and multicultural membership. NA was founded in 1953, and our membership growth was minimal during our initial twenty years as an organization. Since the publication of our Basic Text in 1983, the number of members and meetings has increased dramatically. Today*, NA members hold more than 72,200 meetings weekly in 143 countries. We offer recovery from the effects of addiction through working a twelve-step program, including regular attendance at group meetings. The group atmosphere provides help from peers and offers an ongoing support network for addicts who wish to pursue and maintain a drug-free lifestyle.

Our name, Narcotics Anonymous, is not meant to imply a focus on any particular drug; NA’s approach makes no distinction between drugs including alcohol. Membership is free, and we have no affiliation with any organizations outside of NA including governments, religions, law enforcement groups, or medical and psychiatric associations.

Through all of our service efforts and our cooperation with others seeking to help addicts, we strive to reach a day when every addict in the world has an opportunity to experience our message of recovery in his or her own language and culture.

*As of May 2023.



Spiritual Principles of PR in Action!

The principles we learn through working the steps and applying the concepts and traditions to our personal lives and service efforts are carried into our relationships with people and organizations outside NA.

Show Mutual Respect

We share information with outside groups and community organizations about NA’s program of recovery and our traditions in an effort to create a more successful interaction. This means that we should also take the time to learn about the goals, language, and values of the organizations we are working with.

Be Trustworthy

We operate under the guidelines set forth in our traditions and concepts, with the constant goal of carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. With this in mind, we are able to act with integrity and honesty that allow our partners in the community to rely on our clear, consistent message and reliable actions.

Be Flexible

We may need the organizations we are working with to respond to our needs with flexibility, and we can work to do the same. We take care to listen to their requests and, while keeping in mind our underlying principles, consider whether or not we can accommodate them. In some cases, we may want to reach out to the larger NA service body to help us fulfill requests.

Be Consistent

In providing services to the larger community, we strive to provide accurate information and facilitate an ongoing dialogue. When other organizations know they can count on us, we are in a better position to carry the NA message over an extended period of time to addicts seeking recovery.

Public Relations Helps Addicts Find NA

“Public relations” is just another way of saying “taking care of our relationships.” This can apply to our relationships with the general public, with law enforcement and addiction professionals, and with each other. We fulfill

Unity is the spirit that joins thousands of members around the world in a spiritual fellowship that has the power to change lives.

It Works: How and Why

our primary purpose when we effectively carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. In order to do this, NA has to be known and respected in the community. When professionals who treat addicts know about NA and have a positive opinion, they are more likely to refer potential members to our program. We strive to treat the people outside of the rooms with the same respect, care, and concern we would



extend to a fellow member. In our program, we learn how to apply the principles found in the steps to our daily lives. We can make an effort to translate the honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness we have learned into courtesy and respect for everyone. When we accomplish this, we carry a powerful and positive message of what NA can offer the still-suffering addict.

Our Traditions and Service

You probably hear in meetings that “our traditions are not negotiable.” While they are not negotiable, our traditions are certainly open to interpretation. If you’ve been involved in any NA service for any period of time, you may have witnessed a heated discussion where one member accuses another of “violating” or “breaking” our traditions, and the other may just as adamantly deny this. We all have personal opinions about how to apply the traditions in service, but the best way to ensure we remain in harmony with our guiding principles is through the process of group conscience. Here are some topics for groups and committees to consider when discussing our Twelve Traditions as they relate to public relations service.

Chapter 2 of the *Public Relations Handbook* and the associated resource material contain more in-depth discussions of the Twelve Traditions as they relate to public relations service. *It Works: How and Why* is also a great resource for discussing our traditions. We encourage your committee to explore these matters as a group and we encourage open discussion to determine what is in harmony with our guiding principles.

“Can We Even Do Public Relations?”

Our Eleventh Tradition states that “our *public relations* policy is based on attraction rather than promotion,” so it seems pretty clear that NA is meant to have a public relations policy. Public relations is simply the building and maintaining of relationships. With this action in our relationships, we help to ensure that NA is seen as attractive. We want NA to be known and respected in the community so that potential members can find us. We don’t engage in *promotion* in the course of our PR work.

“What Is Promotion?”

In *It Works: How and Why*, promotion is described as “fanfare, overblown claims, [and] celebrity endorsements.” In PR service, all we are charged with doing is informing the public that we are a credible program of recovery. We must be visible in order to be attractive. The still-suffering addict cannot hear our message if they don’t know where to find us.

Self-Support and Public Service Announcements

Public service announcements can be an opportunity for us to build a cooperative relationship with members of the public in our community. This offering of services to charitable organizations is a way that public organizations and businesses enter into cooperative relationships within the community. By combining our efforts with these organizations and taking a team approach, we demonstrate our ability to cooperate. We are not attaching ourselves or affiliating ourselves with these organizations. Rather, we can enter these relationships based on the spirit of cooperation.

“Are We Violating Our Anonymity with Public Relations?”

Remember that our Eleventh Tradition talks about anonymity in mass media—press, radio, and films (and, by extension, the Internet). Our Twelfth Tradition discusses anonymity as it pertains to placing “principles before personalities”—within NA, we are all equals. Almost every type of service requires us to interact with members of the public.

Self-support means more than just carrying our own financial weight—it means that we fulfill our responsibility to provide information about our program and engage in meaningful relationships with others who have similar goals.

PR Handbook, Chapter 2

“Doesn’t Self-Support Mean We Can’t Accept Any Help from Anyone Outside NA?”

Our Seventh Tradition ensures NA’s independence. We don’t solicit money from the public; this keeps our service efforts and our message free from outside influences. We gratefully accept charitable rates for meeting spaces or public service announcements that would be available to any not-for-profit organization. If NA is not being singled out for special treatment, our self-support is not compromised.

“You Can’t Affiliate with Other Organizations!”

True! However, cooperation and affiliation are vastly different. Affiliation means being joined or connected. Public relations service involves cooperating with other organizations by building and maintaining relationships. We can work together with other organizations in ways that are helpful for both of us. We are careful to follow NA’s guiding principles and realize that other organizations may not be bound by the same principles we are.



Getting Started

Before we start coming up with new projects or start filling requests from professionals, let’s consider what we are doing, how we want to proceed, and why we are choosing to perform this NA service. Our service actions have an effect on our worldwide fellowship. Our aim is to further the vision that every addict in the world has an opportunity to experience recovery in their own language and culture.

To help us achieve our service, we have a two-part Public Relations Statement—one part is focused toward the NA member and the other is aimed toward professionals and the public. We move forward toward public relations goals that help us to make NA a visible and attractive choice for addicts.

- We clarify what services NA can and cannot provide to the community.
- We make NA members more aware of their role in NA’s public image.
- We aim for the public to recognize NA as a positive and reliable organization.
- We develop valuable relationships with professionals and the general public.

The primary purpose of our public relations efforts is to tell the story of Narcotics Anonymous and what our program offers to the still-suffering addict. Our practice of public anonymity is built on the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

It Works: How and Why

What Do We Do in a Public Relations/ Public Information Committee?

Many of us had our first exposure to NA through the efforts of a public information committee. We probably didn’t realize when we picked up an NA pamphlet and meeting schedule in the emergency room, found an ad in the phone book, or copied the NA phonenumber off a poster on our college campus that these were all the result of the efforts of a public information committee. The PI/PR committee provides a chance for us to give back to our communities. We make a positive difference in the lives of others by carrying our message to the public.

What Is Public Information?

Being part of a committee that ends with suffering addicts finding our fellowship is a reward that cannot be expressed, only experienced. Public information service in Narcotics Anonymous has naturally evolved. Many communities have renamed their committees “public relations,” which fosters the building and maintaining of relationships with the public.



In the recent past, our program was relatively unknown. Initially, the focus of our public information efforts was on informing the public of the existence and purpose of our program. As we have grown as a fellowship and developed services, we have recognized the increasing need for public awareness in order to reach the still-suffering addict.

What Is the Individual NA Member's Responsibility?

Public information service happens in a variety of ways. PI and PR committees can evaluate the needs of the community and decide how best to get our message out. Often PI service includes responding to requests for information or presentations about Narcotics Anonymous. When a request is made, a PI or PR committee should evaluate the resources necessary to fulfill the request and decide how to proceed.

A form of public information so simple that it is often overlooked occurs when we accept responsibility for our behavior in public. When we identify ourselves as NA members, each one of us may be seen as a representative of NA to those not familiar with our program. The way we interact with personnel of the facilities we use for our meetings and functions affects how the public views NA as a whole.



How Does the Work Get Done?

When a member receives a request for information from an individual, agency, or the media, they can pass that request along to the PI or PR committee. Some of the ways we provide information to the public include:

1. Responding to requests for presentations from treatment facilities, civic organizations, schools, healthcare organizations, or the media.
2. Distributing posters, billboards, fliers, and other public service announcements to inform the public of how to reach us.
3. Holding community learning days to inform professionals and the public, and workshops to educate and train our members.

4. Providing website information, meeting directories, informational letters, and pamphlets to people who may come in contact with addicts.
5. Cooperating with the H&I and phonline committees in overlapping projects. Where a separate phonline committee does not exist, a PI committee may be responsible for operating a phonline.

What Is the Importance of Anonymity?

We do our best to avoid appearing in the media as members of Narcotics Anonymous and giving our last names in a public setting. We also remind ourselves that when we are meeting with outside entities to do PR

The traditions describe a fellowship that takes collective guidance from spiritual principles rather than individual personalities. That kind of selflessness is what the Twelfth Tradition means by the word "anonymity."

It Works: How and Why

service, we do not go alone. It is vital to consider the Eleventh Tradition and maintain our personal anonymity when we are carrying the NA message in the media. There may be some circumstances where we choose to use trained nonaddicts whose anonymity is not an issue while performing PR service in the

media. We also maintain accountability to our local service body or subcommittee. It is important to remember that it is not the responsibility of the public to be familiar with our traditions, and we want to make sure they understand that no one person or group represents NA as a whole. In order to assure this, we take responsibility by going in pairs or groups to talk to the media.

How Do Members Get Involved?

There is a role for every interested member in their local PR or PI committee. Your input, suggestions, feedback, and participation are needed and valued. We openly invite you to come to a PI committee meeting.



Planning Basics

When we effectively carry our message to the addict who still suffers, more addicts have the opportunity to experience our program of recovery. Planning paves the way for that to be a reality and is an important part of providing effective services for NA. It is vital that everybody understands the desired result, or goal, and their part in reaching that goal. Based on the needs and resources of your area, you can decide which of these processes will work best for you. In addition to the ideas we offer here, Chapter 3 of the *Public Relations Handbook* has information on this topic.

Inventory Current Services

An area inventory can help identify what is working and what needs improvement. Through this process, you can take what is working really well in some committees and perhaps apply that to the services that are weaker.

Inventory Where NA May Be Needed in the Community

The area can gather information to see who needs to hear about NA recovery. This may mean looking where the calls are coming from on the helpline. The idea is to identify if there are potential members or people who come into contact with addicts in the community and who need to be reached with our message.

It is vital that everybody understands the desired result, or goal, and their part in reaching that goal.

Prioritize

Prioritization means that we decide which service projects seem most needed in the NA community. You may want to consider setting priorities in a group assembly that invites all members to participate. This will help all members work together to figure out

service needs, rather than focusing on the desires of individual committees.

Inventory Resources

It is important to know how much money your area can devote to service needs; this will help you decide what can be accomplished. You need to know what your area has to offer financially, but you must also consider human resources. Members with different lengths of cleantime and service experience are often well-suited for various service efforts.



Move into Action

With our shortcomings exposed through the inventory process, we now have an opportunity to be more effective in our service efforts. We change and improve areas we have identified as lacking. These actions can repair our service structure, allowing us to reach more addicts with our message of hope.



Public Relations Around Town

Treatment Facilities and Outpatient Clinics

The 2009 NAWs Membership Survey suggests that nearly 50 percent of our members found NA meetings through the encouragement of addiction treatment providers. Creating and maintaining relationships with treatment facilities can be one way to ensure that our message reaches addicts. Treatment professionals may already be familiar with the NA program, but we want to increase their level of awareness by providing them with information, literature, and meeting schedules. It is important to communicate that NA is a community resource with no membership requirements, fees, or dues. We can remember that it is our responsibility as NA members to maintain our traditions; we can't expect outside organizations to adhere to our program's guiding principles. When local trusted servants have a clearly defined plan and goals for interacting with treatment professionals, this can help assure that we have a productive, ongoing, and cooperative relationship with them.

Criminal Justice

The role of NA public relations in the larger community is to build and maintain relationships with professionals who work with addicts. In the field of criminal justice this includes drug courts, law enforcement agencies, and parole and probation officers. We carefully approach these professionals with trained service members who exhibit a positive attitude, appropriate language, and a willingness to cooperate with their guidelines. We provide current meeting schedules and literature so that they can learn about our program and pass the information along to those they think might benefit from NA. Once we have established our relationship with a facility, we make frequent follow-up visits. It is important that we maintain contacts and make ourselves available for any questions that may arise. Our H&I

committees organize panels that bring meetings into jails and institutions in an effort to carry our message of recovery. Often, these potential members may not be able to get to outside meetings. In order for the facilities to consider these inside meetings a viable option, it is important that NA be known and respected by criminal justice professionals.

Healthcare

Many of our members have found NA because of a recommendation made by a medical professional. Public health clinics, emergency rooms, and physician's offices are places where there is an opportunity for us to educate healthcare professionals about our program. Healthcare professionals are trained to understand medical models of patient care. With this in mind, trusted servants need to be prepared to describe NA's approach as an abstinence-based program of recovery. Members can educate professionals about our program's philosophy of complete abstinence by using our literature. We

We provide current meeting schedules and literature so that they can learn about our program and pass the information along to those they think might benefit from NA.

can explain to professionals that NA views addiction as an illness that affects us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Adding that our program is based on peer support and regular meeting attendance will also aid in explaining how our program works. Providing meeting schedules and helpline phone numbers can also help assure that our message has a chance to reach those who need it.

Planning a PR Presentation

Where? Personnel from schools, healthcare facilities, social service offices, and treatment centers often request information about NA. An introduction letter is an effective way to convey basic information about our program and begin a dialogue with an outside organization. Exhibits and booths at conferences and health fairs can also offer an opportunity to reach out to those who work with addicts. We can view these events as an opportunity to make contacts that may lead to presentations in the future.

Posters, billboards, and public service announcements can be highly effective. It is important to present basic information about what NA is and is not.

Why? The goal of an NA presentation is to leave the audience with a basic understanding of the Narcotics Anonymous program of recovery. We also would like to demonstrate that NA is a valuable and credible community

resource. With careful preparation, a presentation can be an excellent public relations opportunity and help us fulfill our primary purpose.

Who? There are several factors to consider when we are planning a presentation. First, we will want to ask ourselves, Who is our audience? It may help us



to do some research and tailor our presentation to fit the interests of the attendees. Second, we will want to consider who will be doing the presentation. This important selection will depend on the service members available and their level of experience. There could be times when we may consider having a trained nonaddict presenter. This can help us protect our anonymity at local events, and also be helpful in reaching the audience at a professional event.

What? We want to carefully consider the best way to reach our identified audience. Posters, billboards, and public service announcements can be highly effective. It is important to present basic information about what NA is and is not. When presenting from a booth or a panel, a short description of the history and development of NA may be helpful. It is also important to explain the role of the steps and traditions in our program of recovery.



When? We should be careful to schedule a presentation during a time of the day that is most likely to be convenient for the participants.

How? Planning is a vital part of any presentation. Time devoted to rehearsal and preparation can help the presenters become familiar with the format and materials and fill the allotted time slot. We want to be careful to create presentations that use familiar language that our audience will understand. If there are handouts or questionnaires, we should use consistent language in those as well. The presenters need time to prepare and to familiarize themselves with the materials prior to the presentation.

For more information on training and preparing for presentations, please refer to the *Public Relations Handbook*, Chapter 4. The additional resources for this chapter include a sample introduction letter and presentation format.

Getting Our Message Out!

We are surrounded by the media! After we determine the needs and resources of our community, we can utilize newspapers, the Internet, TV, radio, bus benches, and billboards to carry the NA message of recovery to still-suffering addicts.

Who Is Your Audience?

The media can be a great way to inform the public about NA and reach potential members, but there are a few things to consider when presenting facts about NA in the media. When you are planning your project, consider your community and decide what format is most likely to reach the potential member. For example, if you live in a city where many people use public transportation, a bus bench PR campaign may be highly effective. Make sure you are presenting an announcement that will generate interest and invite people to seek out NA, but also clearly and simply communicate information about our program.

Do We Have the Resources to Develop Our Own Media Campaign?

When presenting information to the public about NA, you will definitely want to consider the human and financial resources of the NA community. Some forms of media are more expensive than others, and you will want to find what works best for your NA service community. Public service announcements and public access television are ways to communicate with the public, usually at no cost. Putting together a media campaign can offer a great opportunity to combine forces with a neighboring area and share the costs and the benefits. You may also find that an area or region near you has developed local resources that they are willing to share with you to further your PR efforts.



Consider the Desired Outcome...

NA public relations efforts in the media can present a few challenges. We will want to make the local groups and helpline committees aware of our media efforts. We hope for an increase in calls and attendance as a result of any media campaign, and we want to be prepared. When we take care to perform our PR with planning and humility, we can make NA attractive to the public and further our primary purpose.

In Tradition Eleven, we learn that that no one personality is more important than another. We remind ourselves that when we are meeting with outside organizations, we do not go alone. If we are asked to give an interview about recovery in NA, we seek support from experienced members in our service community. We remember to discuss, plan, and rehearse our presentation with committee members. We also maintain accountability to our local service body or subcommittee. It is important to remember that it is not the responsibility of the public to be familiar with our traditions, and we want to make sure they understand that no one person or group represents NA as a whole.

When we plan carefully, consider the needs of our community, and take care to apply the principles of recovery to our efforts, we are able to utilize the media to reach the still suffering addict.

For more information about how to effectively get our message out in the media, please refer to the *Public Relations Handbook*, Chapter 5. The additional resources for this chapter include preparation tips and examples.

Narcotics Anonymous offers recovery to addicts around the world. We focus on the disease of addiction rather than any particular drug. Our message is broad enough to attract addicts from any social class or nationality. When new members come to meetings, our sole interest is in their desire for freedom from active addiction and how we can be of help.

It Works: How and Why

TRUST

All of the efforts of Narcotics Anonymous are inspired by the primary purpose of our groups. Upon this common ground we stand committed.




A VISION FOR NA SERVICE

Our vision is that one day:

- ▶ Every addict in the world has the chance to experience our message in their own language and culture and find the opportunity for a new way of life;
- ▶ Every member, inspired by the gift of recovery, experiences spiritual growth and fulfillment through service;
- ▶ NA service bodies worldwide work together in a spirit of unity and cooperation to support the groups in carrying our message of recovery;
- ▶ Narcotics Anonymous has universal recognition and respect as a viable program of recovery.

Honesty, trust, and goodwill are the foundation of our service efforts, all of which rely upon the guidance of a loving Higher Power.

GOODWILL



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