

**RESOURCES FOR**

**chapter six**

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

**contents**

Criminal justice encouragement letter ..... 1

Criminal justice letter to professionals..... 5

Frequently asked questions – Criminal justice professionals.....7

Criminal justice tracking form ..... 11

Newcomer workshops..... 13

# CRIMINAL JUSTICE ENCOURAGEMENT LETTER

**A**n encouragement letter can be used to respond to inquiries from inmates about Narcotics Anonymous. A standardized letter can allow committees to respond to these requests in a more timely manner.





Date

First and Last Name  
Address  
City, State Zip code

**Feel free  
to modify  
this sample  
letter  
as needed.**

Dear \_\_\_\_:

Thank you for contacting us; we truly enjoy hearing from incarcerated addicts. In response to your letter, we are writing to provide you with general information about recovery in Narcotics Anonymous, including:

-  information about the NA Fellowship
-  starting meetings in a correctional institution
-  finding a sponsor
-  finding NA meetings upon release

While this letter may give you more information than you requested, we hope you find the enclosed recovery material helpful, and we encourage you to share these publications with others addicts.

## The NA Fellowship

Narcotics Anonymous is an international, multilingual, multicultural fellowship of men and women who are recovering from the disease of addiction. People from all walks of life, ages, races, religious perspectives, occupations, and lifestyles meet regularly in NA meetings every day, all over the world, to help each other remain drug-free. Reading NA literature, attending NA meetings, and talking with other recovering addicts is helpful in achieving a drug-free, productive, and rewarding life.

Even though our members used a variety of drugs, in Narcotics Anonymous we speak of recovery from the disease of addiction, rather than specific drugs. We believe that drugs are a symptom of our disease, and recovery from the disease of addiction is through application of the principles contained in the Twelve Steps. Continuous abstinence from mind- and mood-altering drugs is necessary to maintain ongoing recovery. Many of our members have relapsed, yet have returned to NA meetings and begun their recovery again. In essence, there is no reason to give up on oneself; addicts in NA meetings welcome members back and are ready to help them in their recovery.

In case you are wondering, there are countless members who have found freedom from active addiction while incarcerated. In fact, there are institutional NA meetings celebrating twenty years of helping incarcerated addicts recover. We have the *Reaching Out* publication where incarcerated members share their experience with staying drug-free and recovering while incarcerated. These stories from incarcerated members offer hope to others and let incarcerated addicts know that they are not alone.

## Starting an NA meeting



**Note:** Prior to responding to inmates, the area should have had a discussion about the approach to institutional meetings. The planning would center on whether to pursue having a meeting within the institution or recognizing that this is a facility that the area cannot support at this time. If support cannot be offered, the *Institutional Group Guide* could be included with this letter. A sample response follows.

We have enclosed the *Institutional Group Guide* to help you start an NA meeting in your facility. Our committee discussed whether we could support an NA meeting in your facility; however, at this time, we do not have the trusted servants to fulfill that kind of commitment. We are available to help with your literature needs, provide you with a group starter kit, and make suggestions for meeting formats.

## Sponsorship

A sponsor is an experienced NA member who shares about the recovery process through working the Twelve Steps and about handling everyday life situations without returning to drug use. Choosing a sponsor is a personal decision that each member makes for themselves. As you will read in the enclosed literature, members typically find their NA sponsor by attending NA meetings. However, we are aware that addicts in a correctional setting often find it difficult to find a sponsor. Utilizing a recovery peer within the institution whose recovery you admire may be an alternative for you. *[If your committee has a sponsorship or correspondence program, please include it in this letter.]*

## NA meetings in the community

If you are nearing your release date, you may want to begin planning for that day. A question you may ask yourself that may help you prepare is, “How will I remain drug-free on the day I that I am released?” As you answer that question for yourself, please consider contacting the area helpline *[provide number]*, if you have phone privileges. The helpline could connect you to another addict to talk to. The experience of members seems to be that release day can be scary, overwhelming, and exciting. The feeling of freedom following confinement speaks to addicts in various ways. Some addicts want to celebrate freedom with using drugs. Being able to talk with a recovering addict on the helpline may give you additional support.

The enclosed meeting schedule will help you plan what meeting to attend the day you are released. It has been the experience of many members that making a meeting on their first day out is instrumental in helping them remain drug-free. Planning to attend as many meetings as possible upon release will give you the opportunity to meet other recovering members, gaining their support for your recovery. Many of us needed to meet recovering

addicts, as we had no friends who didn't use drugs and our family members were not that supportive, either. Considering all these issues prior to your release will help you to be more successful in your recovery.

We look forward to seeing you in NA meetings in the community. We have enclosed the pamphlet *Staying Clean on the Outside* to give you additional support with your release preparation.

## **NA literature**

Enclosed are the publications we can supply at this time. We hope you find the recovery information helpful, and we encourage you to share these publications with other addicts seeking recovery who may be incarcerated with you.

In closing, we thank you again for writing to us. Many thousands of addicts have found recovery from addiction in Narcotics Anonymous, and we believe that you can, too. Please accept our very best wishes, and feel free to contact us again if we can be of any further assistance.

In fellowship,

Service Committee Name

Enclosures



*Print this sample letter on your service body's letterhead or include your complete return address and contact information.*



# CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROFESSIONAL LETTER

**T**his letter can be used when responding to standard informational inquiries about Narcotics Anonymous from criminal justice professionals. This is not meant to be a response to those professionals seeking a meeting in their facility. A standardized letter can allow committees to respond to these requests in a more timely manner.

Date

First and Last Name  
Position Title  
Organization  
Address line 1  
City, State Zip code

**Feel free  
to modify  
this sample  
letter  
as needed.**

Dear \_\_\_\_:

We appreciate your interest in Narcotics Anonymous as a program of recovery from drug addiction. NA was founded in 1953 and, with the publishing of our Basic Text in 1983, grew from 2,000 NA groups to over 43,900 weekly meetings in more than 127 countries around the globe speaking over 65 languages<sup>1</sup>.

NA meetings all have a common purpose: recovery from the disease of addiction. In meetings, members speak of their experiences managing life situations without returning to drug use, and discuss recovery principles contained in the Twelve Steps. People of diverse backgrounds, ages, races, religious perspectives, occupations, and lifestyles attend NA meetings. The personal identification which occurs during meetings provides a powerful message of hope.

Incarcerated addicts throughout the world have been recovering from the disease of addiction for over twenty years within institutions. Many of these incarcerated addicts are housed in long-term correctional facilities. Equally, many of our members who found recovery while incarcerated (or involved with drug courts) remain drug-free and active in NA meetings all over the world. Within these meetings, addicts found hope from others recovering – hope to live drug-free, productive, and rewarding lives.



**Note:** Provide a paragraph with information about the area, including how long meetings have been in the community, number of meetings, experience with criminal justice, and phonenumber with meeting schedule.

NA literature is available in thirty-five languages, including English, Spanish, Farsi, French, German, Portuguese, and Japanese. We also produce audio CDs, literature in Braille, informational pamphlets, and CD-ROMs. NA has five book-length publications. To receive

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<sup>1</sup> As of February 2007.

any of these publications or a product catalog, please write to NA World Services at PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409, or visit NAWS' website at [www.na.org](http://www.na.org).

We hope that you find this information useful in your efforts to help addicts find recovery. If you have any further questions or comments, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Service Committee Name

Contact information

Possible enclosures: *Behind the Walls, Staying Clean on the Outside, Reaching Out*



*Print this sample letter on your service body's letterhead or include your complete return address and contact information.*

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROFESSIONALS

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

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

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

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

### Q&A

1

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

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

### Q&A

2

#### **How does NA help parolees upon their release?**

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

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

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

Q&A

3

### **Can NA members pick up parolees at the gate?**

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

Q&A

4

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

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

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

Q&A

5

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

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

Q&A

6

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

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

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

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

## Q&A

7

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

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

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

## Q&A

1

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

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

## Q&A

2

### **Can we have meetings here at the courthouse?**

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

## Q&A

3

### **Does NA sign court cards?**

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

**Q&A**  
**4**

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

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

**Q&A**  
**5**

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

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

**Q&A**  
**6**

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

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

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

# CRIMINAL JUSTICE TRACKING FORM

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Area name \_\_\_\_\_

H&I contact person \_\_\_\_\_

H&I contact phone number \_\_\_\_\_

New meetings and presentations:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Current projects:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Current issues that need help:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Number of H&I meetings per week \_\_\_\_\_

Number of panel coordinators \_\_\_\_\_ Number of panel leaders \_\_\_\_\_

Open panel slots:

Coordinator slots \_\_\_\_\_ Leader slots \_\_\_\_\_

Learning day/workshop schedule:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Cooperation with area committees and the ASC:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

General Comments:

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# WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

## NEWCOMER WORKSHOPS

Often NA groups experience an influx of new members. These addicts may be court-ordered clients via the judicial system, referrals from treatment centers, or part of a natural growth process within an area. Increased numbers of members attending a meeting may place constraints on groups, such as coffee costs rising, more involved facility setup and cleanup, or increases in literature and keytag expenses.

Group members may have found that, in spite of their best efforts, these newer members' needs are not being met and, with NA's primary purpose in mind, the group has decided to create a plan that will help these new (and potential) members to feel welcome. This plan may include creating a structured format for newcomers. If that is the direction of an area, here are various formats that may be considered:

- ① **Create weekly newcomer meetings.** These meetings would function like any NA meeting; however, they would be identified in the meeting schedule as a "newcomer meeting." The focus of the meeting would be geared to helping new members understand the NA program. The meeting format may contain information that provides meeting basics and etiquette for newer members, such as keytags being given to group members celebrating lengths of cleantime, cakes being served at a particular meeting to celebrate annual recovery dates, donation basket being passed with everyone encouraged to contribute, etc. Some communities use the IPs or Basic Text as a focus for the meeting.
- ② **Create an ongoing, regularly scheduled workshop** (e.g., once a month) geared to the needs of newer members. The workshop could be in a panel format. Trusted servants from the area may accept the commitment for a year, or panel members may be trusted servants of an area subcommittee. These panels provide a forum for new members to ask for information about NA and our language (e.g., What does "clean" mean? Why do you pass a basket? etc.), and to share information about the NA program such as meeting attendance and the concept of sponsorship. These workshops could be held in a meeting facility prior to a regularly scheduled NA meeting, at a treatment center that has clients completing treatment, or perhaps at a courthouse that has a drug court program.
- ③ **Add a brief new member orientation** before the start of regularly scheduled meetings. This would become part of a meeting format and may address:
  - ✍ when attendance slips will be signed,
  - ✍ overview of meeting format,
  - ✍ purpose of keytags, and
  - ✍ purpose of the basket that is passed.

This is not an exhaustive list, and your area may want to include additional items for the brief orientation.

We highlighted three ways to help new members feel welcome in a meeting environment, yet there could be any combination of avenues to help with an influx of members.

## Area considerations

In whatever manner an area chooses to proceed, there are several spiritual principles that can help you in your efforts. Practicing the principles of cooperation, unity, communication, and attraction will help an area to better carry the message of recovery to those who want recovery in NA.

Groups can help inform members by announcing the workshops and/or orientations at their meetings. The area could plan to fund literature for these efforts, and trusted servants from various groups can sign up as greeters, speakers, or panel members. In fact, all area groups can rotate the responsibility of providing for the new member orientations. The area may choose to have a newcomer workshop coordinator who assists the groups with planning and maintaining these meetings. These are a few ideas on how an area could welcome new members. Through area brainstorming and planning, an area will find what works best for them.

## Planning tips

- ✍ Some newcomers may not be able to focus for long periods of time. Simple, short sharing from members can be helpful in holding their attention.
- ✍ Explaining that NA's philosophy focuses on the disease of addiction rather than any specific drug and that we are inclusive, regardless of drugs used, can be helpful for newcomers.
- ✍ This can be an opportunity to explain sponsorship, various meeting formats listed in schedules, what keytags mean, and why the basket is passed during a meeting.
- ✍ Meeting greeters (with meeting lists) can set the welcome tone.