

NA Boulder
24-Hour Helpline
Volunteer Handbook
March, 2020

Helpline
Number:
303-412-2884

Introduction

The primary purpose of Narcotics Anonymous is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers, and to help addicts stay clean. Making ourselves available to addicts who need help is one of the reasons we provide a helpline phone service. Anyone can call and talk anonymously to a recovering addict, 24 hours a day. Addicts can call our helpline and be given meeting times, meeting locations (including virtual meeting information), and receive general information about the Narcotics Anonymous program. **The helpline's main goal is to encourage addicts to go to a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous.**

What is the N.A. Program?

Narcotics Anonymous is a non-profit society, or fellowship of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one requirement for membership: the desire to stop using. We suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing is that they work.

There are no strings attached to N.A. We are not affiliated with any other organizations. We have no initiation fees or dues, no pledges to sign no promises to make to anyone. We are not connected with any political, religious, or law enforcement groups, and are under no surveillance at any time. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion.

We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. We have learned from our group experience that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean.

Volunteer Policies

The suggested requirements for our helpline volunteers are that they be active members of Narcotics Anonymous, attend meetings regularly, have one year clean time, and be willing to follow the guidelines in this handbook. Your availability at the time of the 'on-call' shift

your request is imperative.

When speaking to callers, we encourage you to remain objective and non-argumentative. Remember, you are likely to be the first contact a person has with Narcotics Anonymous. A warm, friendly voice will reassure a frightened, uneasy person in need of help.

Always respect the confidential aspects of your role as a helpline volunteer. If you are answering a call from the helpline, be certain the person requesting help is connected to your line before identifying yourself as an addict or as a member of Narcotics Anonymous.

Remember: we do not endorse or make recommendations about any other programs or agencies. If another program is part of your experience, strength, and hope, be sure the caller is told that no outside program is affiliated with, or recommended by, Narcotics Anonymous. If the caller insists on information about treatment facilities, you can suggest they do an internet search of: Drug Abuse. In general, try to keep helpline calls brief, because it is important to keep the helpline open to others in need. You can, if appropriate, suggest calling them back after your shift, to provide them with more information. Never give a helpline caller your personal phone number. If you decide to call anyone back, PRESS *67 to block your number before calling them.

Never give the names or phone numbers of other helpline volunteers or any members of Narcotics Anonymous. If you get a call from someone looking for an Area Officer or Sub-Committee Chairperson, take the caller's name and phone number down, and contact the person they requested yourself, to give them the message. Or, you can suggest they contact a chairperson through their anonymized email address, located on our naboulder.org website.

Everyone occasionally has doubts or frustrations about a call as a helpline volunteer. If you run into any problems or have questions, call the helpline coordinator (the current helpline coordinator is Larissa R., 650-799-0991).

Make sure the information you give callers is accurate and up-to-date. Take time to check current schedules and information. It is better to give no information than wrong information.

It is your responsibility to keep current meeting directories on hand. Occasionally, a helpline volunteer will get Narcotics Anonymous "business" related calls. It might be someone wanting to start a meeting, a facility that wants NA meeting schedules sent to them, a request for a one-time speaking engagement, a treatment facility wanting to start a meeting, etc. **Do not attempt to answer these types of requests. Ask for their name and phone number, and pass that information on to the PI Coordinator (the current PI coordinator is Joseph C.,**

303-443-1974) or to the H&I Coordinator (the current H&I coordinator is Anna, 970-599-3153). Get as much information as you can about what they are requesting. Let them know you will be passing on their name and number to the person responsible for answering those questions. Relay the message to the correct person as soon as possible. Leave your name and phone number if you leave a message with an answering machine or a person other than the responsible party. **Also request a confirmation that your message has been received.**

During shelter-in-place laws: Boulder County is currently experiencing a “shelter-in-place” order, and the majority of our region’s meetings are now on-line. It is often difficult to verbally give a caller the link and explain how to attend a virtual NA meeting, so during this time, we are allowing helpline volunteers to text the links to meetings to the callers (if the caller requests it). While it is not required, and you can still tell the person to look up meetings on our naboulder.org website, it can simplify the process sometimes to send a desperate addict a meeting link through the phone (texting). Use discretion when choosing this option. Do not respond to any additional text messages after the link is set. You can simply state that if they need to communicate with an addict, to contact the helpline number again. This process will be evaluated over time, and may be adjusted if necessary.

Help Line Basics

When you answer a helpline call, the number (303) 412-2884 will appear as the phone ID. You will hear the recording: “This is an NA Helpline call. Press 1 to accept, or 2 to decline.”

What NA Does Not Do

Narcotics Anonymous does not operate detox units, recovery or halfway houses, and is not affiliated with any facilities. Narcotics Anonymous does not crusade, solicit, or advertise for members to join us.

Narcotics Anonymous does not engage in, or sponsor research. Narcotics Anonymous does not keep membership records or case histories. Narcotics Anonymous does not follow-up on members, or in any way try to control them.

Narcotics Anonymous does not make medical or psychological diagnoses, and does not provide marriage, family, or vocational counseling. Narcotics Anonymous does not provide welfare, counseling, or other social services. Narcotics Anonymous does not conduct religious services of any kind. Narcotics Anonymous does not accept money for its services, is not funded by

public or private sources, and accepts no contributions from non-members.

What to Do When Answering the Helpline

- When you are answering a call from the helpline, wait until the person requesting help is connected to your line before identifying yourself as an addict, or mentioning Narcotics Anonymous.
- You can identify yourself with “this is the NA helpline,” and say that you are an addict or a member of Narcotics Anonymous.
- Ask what the caller needs.
- Remember to be helpful and polite to all callers.
- Have the necessary materials (i.e., this handbook, a current meeting list, a white NA booklet, some NA pamphlets, etc.) available for questions the caller may ask.
- Make appropriate referrals when necessary (you can use the referral information at the end of this handbook). If you receive any crisis calls during your shift (i.e. OD / Suicide / Violence) get the number of the caller, if possible, and call 911. If other problems arise, you can call the helpline coordinator to ask what you should do.

What Not to Do When Answering the Helpline

- Don't argue with people whose views of addiction differ from yours or NA's. If the caller does not want to stop using, do not try to persuade him or her to stop.
- Don't try to handle calls that you are not qualified to answer.
- Don't give medical advice.
- Don't give out other people's names or telephone numbers.
- Don't answer questions (and break anyone's anonymity) about who you saw at an NA meeting. However, general information may be given about NA's make-up (i.e.: different sizes of meetings, meetings are open to all age groups, open vs. closed meetings, etc.)
- Don't glorify active addiction by telling the caller war stories.
- Don't put yourself at risk by agreeing to pick up a caller, or by meeting a caller alone. If you choose to meet a newcomer, always bring another recovering addict with you, and

meet in a neutral, public location (or meet them at a NA meeting).

Common Types of Helpline Calls

The following illustrates several types of calls commonly received by helpline volunteers. These outlines are not meant to be a script to use for helpline calls. Instead, they are offered as examples of appropriate responses to various situations. On the following pages, possible responses appear in *italics*. Remember that we carry the message of recovery to the caller when we express:

1. Our primary objective is to get the addict to a meeting
2. The program works
3. We were once suffering ourselves
4. We care and are willing to help

Remember that your tone of voice and delivery speed is just as important as the words you use. Acknowledge what the caller is saying and feeling. Do not use judgmental words or preach to the caller. It is important to keep in mind that calls may not follow exactly the dialogue detailed in this section. However, familiarity with this information will make it easier to respond appropriately to callers and to serve within the spirit of the Twelve Traditions of NA.

Requests for Information

Give a brief description of NA to callers requesting information. If they request presentations, special meetings, literature, activities, etc., ask to take their name and number, and refer them to the PI coordinator.

Personal Calls

If the caller wants to meet with or talk to a specific individual in NA, politely tell them, "*It is our policy that we cannot accept personal messages, and I cannot give out the names or telephone numbers of anyone who may or may not be in the fellowship.*" Keep in mind that the anonymity of our members is very important, and we must **never** acknowledge anyone's membership in our fellowship, either directly or indirectly.

Crisis Calls

Although most of the calls taken by the helpline volunteers are routine in nature, occasionally, a crisis call may arise. Always take these calls seriously. When you have established that a caller is in crisis, quickly refer the caller to the appropriate telephone number from the Community Service Referral List (included in this packet). Make sure the person writes the number down. You can end the call with, *“When the crisis passes, give our telephone number to your loved one and suggest he/she call NA to hear about recovery from drug addiction.”* In the case of overdoses, suicide, or violence, get the caller’s number (if possible), and call 911.

Does the Addict Want Help?

Find out if the caller/addict wants to stop using. If the answer is yes, and he or she would like to hear about recovery from drug addiction, talk to them (see the “Talking to an Addict” Section).

If the addict does not want to stop using or come to the telephone, tell the caller, *“We cannot do anything for your loved one until they want to stop using – the addict must want help. There are, however, programs for loved ones of addicts. I can tell you how to get information if you would like.”*

NOTE: Always explain briefly the principle of our Sixth Tradition: *“Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with, nor recommends any other organization, institution, emergency service, agency or program. We simply provide alternate phone numbers to callers who need services other than NA.”* Answer questions about NA politely, but do not tie up the telephone for long. *“We need to clear the line now in case an addict is trying to call us. Feel free to attend an open meeting if you would like to find out more about NA. Your loved one may wish to attend with you.”*

NOTE: For additional information, refer to the “How to Handle Special Calls” section.

Talking to an Addict

Listen and respond to the caller. A suffering addict probably will indicate that he or she wants information or wants help.

Addict Wants Information about NA

Answer the caller's questions. If you sense that the caller wants more information, ask, "*Do you have any more questions about Narcotics Anonymous?*" After the caller has asked all of his or her questions, and if you sense that the caller wants to continue the conversation, then respond, "*It sounds like you are really hurting. I know the desperation that you must be feeling. Do you want help to quit using drugs?*" Wait to see if they indicate they want help. Guide them to attend a meeting of NA.

Addict Interested – May Be Ready for Help: NO

Conclude the call by saying, "*When you are ready, we are here to help you. Our program works for those who want to quit using. Always remember that there is a way out. Addicts do recover.*"

Addict Interested – May Be Ready for Help: YES

If the caller wants help that is beyond the scope of services that NA can provide (i.e., detox, treatment information, etc.), furnish one or more telephone numbers from the Community Service Referral List (included in this packet). Be familiar with the "How to Handle Special Calls" section. Do not hang up until you are fairly sure you have done all you can for this caller. Listen to the caller, and express your concern.

Addict Wants to Stop Using or Is Not Sure

Respond with empathy. Share a little about what it was like, what happened, and what it is like today for you. Do not share war stories. You might sum up the conversation by saying something like, "*There was a time in my life that I thought I'd never be able to quit using drugs. However, since I found NA, I haven't had to use. Would you like to go to an NA meeting?*" (If yes, see next section. If no, see No above).

Referring an Addict to a Meeting

Give the caller information (time, day, weblink, call-in phone number, location, and directions) about the next available meeting(s). Take a few moments and explain to the caller what he or she can expect at a meeting. Include an explanation of the structure or format of the meeting (e.g., speaker, topic, discussion, Basic Text study, etc.). It is helpful to go into some detail, to help them feel as comfortable as possible. Conclude the call by saying, *“To get the most out of the meeting, try to get there a few minutes early. If you need further help, give us a call again. You’ve done the right thing by calling us. I will/won’t be at that meeting. I’m looking forward to meeting you.”*

Addict Won’t Go to a Meeting

Ask them why they will not be attending a meeting. The following are examples of ways to respond to excuses for not going to a meeting. The addict’s questions and statements may sound like he or she is not ready yet, but remember that the caller has already expressed that he or she needs help. Our intention is to help the caller focus on the solutions, rather than the problems keeping him or her from attending NA meetings.

If the caller is on guard, and asks “What happens at a meeting?” respond, *“We are a group of clean addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. Addicts share about what it was like and what life is like today. You aren’t required to do or say anything.”*

If the caller presents obstacles, “My car doesn’t work, etc.” respond, *“Does this problem have a solution?”* Take the time to try and help them find a solution to their obstacles *“There is a bus stop right in front of the building this meeting is located at... I take it all the time.”* or *“if you don’t have internet, you can call into the virtual meeting.”* If the caller uses his/her children as an excuse, “I don’t have anyone to take care of my children,” respond, *“If you don’t have childcare, you can bring children to an open meeting. If your kids are in school during the day, you could attend daytime meetings.”*

If the caller says they are too scared, respond, *“You are not alone. During my first meeting, I felt so self-conscious I was afraid to say anything. You don’t need to worry, we are all pretty friendly.”* Try to arrange for someone to meet them at the meeting.

If the caller says he or she is still using, “I can’t stay clean long enough to go to a meeting,”

respond, *“If you want to stop using, then you are still welcome at a meeting. We only ask that you not have any drugs or paraphernalia with you during the meeting, and that you just listen to others who attend the meeting clean.”*

If the caller says they are too hopeless, “It won’t work for me. I’m too far-gone,” respond, *“I felt that way too; however, with the help of NA, I have a choice. I don’t have to use today.”*

If the caller has other excuses, “I can’t go because: I have family or work obligations; my wife/husband doesn’t approve; etc.” respond, *“It sounds like if you don’t get help, you may not be able to keep your job, family, etc.”*

After discussing the caller’s reasons for not going to a meeting and some possible solutions, ask the caller, *“Do you want to go to a meeting?”* For a response, refer to any of the appropriate suggested answers within this section.

How to Handle Special Calls

The Narcotics Anonymous helpline is strictly for dispensing information about the NA fellowship, NA meetings, and recovery. A volunteer must always remember that he/she is only a recovering addict sharing their experience, strength, and hope. As volunteers, we are not professional crisis counselors, doctors, or psychologists, etc., and we do not have the right to give professional advice. Callers with issues that, in the volunteer’s opinion, are beyond the boundaries of Narcotics Anonymous, should be quickly and politely given an appropriate referral number from the Community Service Referral List (included in packet).

Before providing any other referral number, always explain that Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with and does not recommend any other organization, institution, emergency service, agency, or program. We simply provide alternate telephone numbers for those callers who need services other than NA.

Overdoses (Probable or Possible)

If you suspect the caller has overdosed, first try to get them to call 911. If you remain calm it will have a helpful effect on your caller. If you can get them to give you their name and number, you can call 911 for them. Do what you can in situations like this. **Under no circumstances should you give medical advice.**

Please Remember, as a helpline volunteer, our primary objective is to direct the potential newcomer to an NA meeting or direct questions about our fellowship to the appropriate person.

Our NA Boulder Helpline is not meant to be a community referral line.

There are plenty of other numbers to be found in the phonebook under the listings of Drug and Alcohol Abuse. However, if we are asked, we may provide callers with alternative phone numbers.

When providing these numbers, always explain that Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with, nor does it recommend, any other organizations, institutions, emergency services, agencies or programs.

In the spirit of cooperation we simply provide alternate telephone numbers for those callers who need services other than what Narcotics Anonymous can provide.

Alternative Phone Numbers

EMERGENCIES.....911

Boulder Suicide and Crisis Hotline.....303-447-1665

Mental Health Partners (24 hour Colorado Crisis Line)....844-493-8255

Rocky Mountain Poison Control & Drug Center.....800-222-1222

Moving to End Sexual Assault (Rape Crisis Hotline).....303-443-7300

Withdrawal Management (ARC Detox Phonenumber).....303-441-1281

Medical Referral Lines Colorado Health Nurse line.....303-389-1320

Homeless Shelters Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (8am-5pm).....303-293-2217

Boulder Salvation Army (8am-5pm).....303-294-0827

Boulder Shelter for the Homeless (5pm-10am).....303-442-4646

Attention Homes (for under 25 year olds)..... 303-447-1207

Naranon National Help Line.....800-477-6291

Physical Abuse/Shelter Boulder Safehouse for Non-Violence.....303-444-2424

RTD Bus Info RTD (bus service, Boulder)..... 303-299-6000

Spanish Speaking Hotlines:

Moving to End Sexual Assault (Rape Crisis Hotline)....303-443-7300

Crisis Support Line.....844-493-8255

United Way.....211

RTD (bus service, Boulder)..... 303-299-6000

Other Colorado Region NA Hotlines:

Mile High Region’s NA Hotline.....303-832-3784

(Denver Region serves the Denver Metro Area)

Off the Wall Region’s NA Hotline.....970-282-8079

(Northern Front Range Region serves Estes Park, Fort Collins, Greeley, Loveland, and Sterling)

Bringing Freedom East Region’s NA Hotline.....970-458-5081

(North Eastern Colorado Region serves Sterling and Yuma)

Mountains West Region’s NA Hotline.....970-306-6535

(Central Mountains Region serves Aspen, Breckenridge, Carbondale, Eagle, Eagle-Vail, Glenwood Springs, Granby, Leadville, and Rifle)

Pikes Peak Region’s NA Hotline.....719-637-1580

(South Central and South East Colorado Regions serves Colorado Springs, Nathrop, Pueblo, Salida, and Security)

Serenity Unlimited Region’s NA Hotline.....970-201-1133

(Western Slope Region serves Delta, Grand Junction, Montrose, Telluride, and Moab)

NA Boulder website: www.naboulder.org

NA Denver website: www.nadenver.org

NA Colorado regional website: www.nacolorado.org

NA World website: www.na.org

Nationwide Teleconference NA meeting list:

www.naphone.org

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrong.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first, personal recovery depends on NA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as he may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.
5. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.
6. 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.
7. Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues, hence the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion, we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and film.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to principles before personalities.