

A Guide to Narcotics Anonymous Helpline Service in New Jersey

732-933-0462

1-800-992-0401

www.nanj.org

That no addict seeking recovery need ever die.

You are performing a valuable service when you answer the telephones for Narcotics Anonymous. Your job requires compassion, reliability and persistence. You can express your compassion when addicts or their loved one's call NA and ask for help. It will take patience and persistence to effectively listen to the needs of the caller so you can provide the appropriate referral to a meeting. Your commitment is vitally important both to yourself and to other addicts. Your committed participation as a Helpline Volunteer is SELFLESS service to people who need the message of Narcotics Anonymous.

THE RECOVERING ADDICT WHO VOLUNTEERS TO BE AVAILABLE FOR HELPLINE TWELVE-STEP VOLUNTEER WORK IS THE MOST ESSENTIAL ELEMENT TO THE SUCCESSFUL OPERATION OF THE NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS PHONE SERVICE.

The Helpline volunteer spends time talking to the caller about **recovery in Narcotics Anonymous**. It may be beneficial to share one's own personal experience, strength, and hope. The volunteer will then offer information about meetings, their location, and time.

The Helpline spreads the word to the suffering addict by:

- Sharing N.A. meeting times and places.
- A one-on-one conversation with a recovering addict via the telephone.
- Giving directions to N.A. meetings.
- Setting up in-person 12th Step calls with the suffering addict, when possible, to do safely. (Remember 2 addicts together constitute a meeting.)

It is important to determine if the caller is in immediate physical danger, or in need of immediate medical assistance. If so, the caller should be encouraged to call 911 immediately. We are not qualified to handle emergencies. The caller can call back once the emergency has been resolved.

Addiction is a disease that affects the whole family or environment where a using addict lives. Therefore, many calls come from the family and friends of addicts. NA does not deal with these problems. Families and friends of addicts often feel isolated and ashamed. They need and deserve encouragement. Please refer family members of the addict to Nar-Anon at 877-424-4491. This is provided in the spirit of cooperation not affiliation or any implied endorsement.

Nar-Anon 1-877-424-4491
Emergency 911

REQUIREMENTS:

1. 1-year clean time and the ability to carry an NA message of recovery.
2. Willingness to receive calls at any hour of the day or night.
3. A working knowledge of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of NA.
4. Attendance at a Helpline Volunteer Workshop.
5. Regular attendance at NA meetings.
6. Access to current NA meeting information for New Jersey (NANJ.org or a current NJ Statewide Meeting Directory).
7. Advise any other members of your household that your name and number appear on an NA helpline.

REASONS FOR REMOVAL OF HELPLINE VOLUNTEERS:

1. Relapse.
2. Continued failure to respond to Helpline calls.
3. Taking physical, emotional, sexual, or financial advantage of a caller.
4. Disregard of the 12 Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous.
5. Disregard of the written guidelines.
6. Not attending NA meetings on a regular basis.
7. Failure to respond to Helpline volunteer verification calls. If a message is left and you do not return our call to inform us you are still clean and still wish to remain on the volunteer list, you will be removed as a volunteer.

METHOD FOR REMOVAL OF HELPLINE VOLUNTEERS:

1. Voluntary resignation.
2. Group conscience of the NJ Statewide Helpline Committee or the relevant area service subcommittee.

GUIDELINES FOR ANSWERING CALLS

We are an information service only, where an addict can call to talk anonymously with a recovering addict. **We are not qualified to handle emergency or crisis situations. Volunteers are not required to provide rides to meetings.**

Our primary purpose is to stay clean and to carry the NA message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. By far, the best way to make ourselves available to those who need help is to provide a Helpline telephone service where someone can call and talk anonymously to a recovering addict. The suffering addict can call this number without fear of arrest, receive information about NA, including meeting times and locations, and perhaps make arrangements to meet someone at a meeting.

THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS TO GET THE PROSPECTIVE NEWCOMER TO AN NA MEETING.

There are some situations where someone may require medical attention. Have that person call “911” or their nearest hospital.

- If the call is a request for information about NA meeting lists, etc., make sure the caller receives the information, i.e., in person, by email or our website (NANJ.org), etc.
- If the caller is requesting treatment information, in the spirit of our 6th Tradition, please give this disclaimer: “Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with nor does it endorse any treatment Center or doctor.”
- Find out what you can about the caller’s needs. If they do not want to stop using, do not try to persuade them; this tends to be a turn-off and may jeopardize a later opportunity. Be patient – remember you are dealing with a suffering person.
- Be aware of your limits! It is okay if you cannot handle a caller. Just remember that you are doing the best that you can.
- Use your best judgment on whether to initiate a 12th Step call, which is when you and another recovering addict go to meet the person. **This is not a requirement of a Helpline Volunteer, but if you choose to go, remember that NO ONE goes alone!!!**
- You can offer to meet the caller at a meeting. **If they do not want to, do not force the issue.**
- **If you do arrange to meet a caller, we recommend meeting at an NA Meeting, if you can’t meet at a meeting, don’t go alone! Bring current meeting information as well as NA Literature.**

TYPES OF CALLERS:

1. The addict calling for help for themselves.

Many of the calls are requests for meeting locations. These are mostly from NA members. Some however, are from newcomers who wish to remain anonymous. The requested information should be given without additional inquiry.

2. Person calling for help for another person. This person could be any one of the following:

- Family Members
- Friends

If a third party calls NA, the first inquiry must always be direct and to the point: “IS THE PERSON THERE?” – “WILL THEY TALK TO ME?” If the answer is ‘No’, ask,

“DO THEY WANT **HELP?**” If the answer is “No, but they need to...”, there is nothing that we can do in such a situation. The addict must ask for help. This is explained to the caller and they are advised to make the NA Helpline number available to the addict. The person calling for help for another person should be treated with kindness and the utmost patience.

This person can be offered the number for Nar-Anon 877-424-4491.

For more information about Narcotics Anonymous in NJ, they can visit NANJ.org.

3. Person regarding a Fellowship matter.

Calls can come in from TV and radio stations, high schools, treatment centers or other organizations and institutions looking for information or public speakers. These calls should be referred to the Public Information/Relations Subcommittee, Public@nanj.org. They are prepared to handle public relations in the limitations of the Traditions.

In addition, students occasionally call requesting information for a school project. Again, direct them to the Public Information/Relations Subcommittee.

If a local Public Information/Relations Subcommittee is not available, callers should visit the website at www.nanj.org and select the button on the left for Professional Info. Your tact and diplomacy are essential. We never take sides, express personal opinions or say anything that would reflect against the Traditions of NA. Good public relations with everyone are everyone's responsibilities.

Approved Referrals: (No other referrals should be given)

- **NAR-ANON 877-424-4491**
- **EMERGENCY 911**
- **Local Hospital**

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Going personally to meet the caller may have the potential for significant safety problems. The following points should be considered before making a 12th Step call in person:

- Has the caller used today? Does it sound safe to meet the caller?
- Before meeting with the caller, let them know you must find another volunteer to accompany you. **NEVER GO ALONE!! MEET THEM AT A MEETING!!**

- We recommend that at least one of the volunteers is the same gender as the caller.
- If you decide to meet the caller in-person, try to meet in a neutral, public location. A diner, restaurant, or shopping center would be ideal. Meeting a newcomer in your home or in their home is an unnecessary risk. Inform the caller as to the specific time you will arrive and meet them out front. If meeting or picking up the addict at their home is unavoidable, consider the circumstances and take the necessary precautions, be sure to remember your personal recovery and safety come first.
- Ensure that all arrangements for meeting the caller are accurate and understood by both parties.
- Upon arranging to meet the caller, it is suggested that the volunteers bring a current meeting list, NA pamphlets, and a White Booklet.
- Tell someone where you are going and call them when you get there.
- Don't stop anywhere on the way to a meeting, especially at the suggestion of the newcomer.
- The NA program has one must that applies to everyone: **NO DRUGS OR PARAPHENALIA BE IN OUR POSSESSION**. It is important that the volunteer tries to ensure that the newcomer follows this requirement. This is for the protection of the volunteer, the fellowship, and its groups.
- Once an addict has been taken to a meeting, the Helpline volunteer may help the addict obtain telephone numbers and transportation to other meetings.

Help-line Volunteers Do's and Don'ts

Do's:

- **Do** always identify yourself with your first name only and state that you are an addict.
- **Do** respond to all calls as soon as possible.
- **Do** remember to be helpful and polite to callers.
- **Do** always have the necessary materials (White Booklet, Meeting List, NA pamphlets, Website Information, and relevant emails) in addition to pen and paper close to the telephone, to avoid delay and confusion.
- **Do** find out what the caller needs. Ask questions.
- **Do** assure that if you are returning a call, be certain that the person requesting help is on the line before identifying yourself as an addict or mentioning Narcotics Anonymous.
- **Do** follow up on all calls that were referred to other committees in the Fellowship.
- **Do** contact the Helpline chairperson if problems arise.
- **If you have a question about how to handle a call, contact helpline@nanj.org.**
- **If you receive a DIFFICULT or HARD TO HANDLE CALL that requires assistance, please CONTACT helpline@nanj.org.**

Don'ts

- **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 them 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 about who was at an NA meeting to anyone (including police officers, probation officers, or significant others). However, general information may be given about NA's make-up (variance in size of meeting, NA open to all age groups, etc.)
- **Don't** glorify active addiction by telling war stories.
- **Don't** talk to the press or television representatives. Refer them to Public Information/Relations.

Please relay any comments, suggestions or problems to the Helpline Committee at helpline@nanj.org

We can improve through your comments and suggestions.

