

OUTREACH WORKSHOP PRESENTATION GUIDE

Introduction

This bulletin is offered as a guide for use by any member of NA to present an educational workshop on outreach. Feel free to use the material as presented here or improvise in whatever way suits the needs or circumstances in your location. We recommend using several different presenters, one for each subtopic. Some presentations of this material have questions and answers with each topic, and some wait until the sharing session of the workshops. The information in this bulletin is drawn from many sources and may be tailored to suit any audience.

Workshops of this type are an excellent way to introduce members to what outreach is, what it does, what it is not, and how outreach is accomplished. When conducting service workshops or learning days, efforts should be made to present an overview of NA services that is easily understood and not intimidating. The goal should be to show how members can participate and the benefits of doing so. Workshop presenters are encouraged to contact the USSC for additional information and assistance. Establishing this communication early will be of great benefit to anyone interested in the topic. Information contained in our bulletin, "What is Outreach," will also be extremely helpful in conducting an outreach workshop.

General Workshop Topics:

- The Idea of Outreach
- Between the "I"s
- Three types of Outreach
- Functions of Outreach
- Outreach to NA Groups
- What Outreach Is Not
- Available Resources Forum/Sharing Session

The Idea of Outreach

The intent of outreach is simply to insure that any group, meeting, or addict who wishes can be linked to our service structure, receive services and participate in the NA service structure.

Some form of "outreach" exists in virtually every emerging NA community. Usually this takes the form of one or a few members with the energy to get together and travel long distances to provide support to an isolated group or institutional meeting. During the 1980's some of these spontaneous efforts pulled together and subcommittees were formed in some locations. Often, they received enthusiastic support to help improve communication, plan related activities for isolated group members, and provide direct support to isolated groups or institutional meetings. As new subcommittee members were trained, committee continuity and consistency resulted in more groups becoming involved and linked to the fellowship. Today's outreach committees draw much of their experience from these earlier efforts and continue to rely on the principle of one group of addicts helping another. It is one way our fellowship has been able to spread from city to city and country

to country. The emergence of formalized outreach committees has made possible a more systematic approach to providing these services.

Currently, some Narcotics Anonymous outreach committees exist at every level of service. Although their activities vary widely, they seem to share a few common goals. First, outreach committees assist NA groups to solve problems that may impede the group's growth and may even threaten the group's survival. These committees also help groups to enhance their ability to carry a message of recovery through greater knowledge of and exposure to the NA service structure. Finally, outreach committees help NA groups to overcome the pitfalls of isolation by encouraging increased contact with the fellowship as a whole.

The focus of outreach is within NA. From long distance travel to correspondence to getting GSRs to show up at the ASC to registering groups -- all this is within the realm of outreach.

Between the "I"s

NA outreach service is designed to complement other services, not to duplicate them. Outreach subcommittees are formed because they fill a need. Outreach service efforts can assist a broad range of isolated and institutional groups and members that sometimes fall outside the scope of NA's H&I and PI service. For example, our public information committees work with those outside NA, helping them to know what we offer to addicts seeking recovery. Our Hospitals and Institutions committees conduct panels in facilities where NA is not available otherwise, helping addicts directly to find recovery. As a result of our PI and H&I efforts, professionals, facility staff, inmates, or patients often start an NA meeting in an institution, and it can easily become isolated from services and communication with NA as a whole. To these struggling groups and isolated member, it is often outreach that rekindles the hope that "together we can."

Three Types of Outreach

For discussion purposes, we can describe three general categories of outreach service; extended, community, and institutional. Where geographical, language and cultural barriers are involved, we find extended outreach. In extended outreach the focus is on communication to help bring isolated members together or in touch with "the rest" of NA. Institutional outreach services often take the form of physical support, correspondence, newsletters, and literature mailings to NA members and groups in a facility where access is limited. Community outreach occurs in countryside, suburban and metropolitan settings where NA already exists and some form of service structure has been developed to serve local needs. The focus in a community setting is on participation; assisting groups in need of support, getting GSRs to area meetings, and registering groups.

Around our fellowship there are many examples of each of the three main types of outreach. Contact information and some resource material from many of these locations can be obtained from the USSC Outreach Subcommittee.

Functions of Outreach Subcommittees

In some places outreach services are conducted at the regional or national level. Elsewhere, area subcommittees do the actual work, with a regional subcommittee serving to coordinate, train, and provide a problem solving forum. Regardless of the structure, each outreach subcommittee appears to perform tasks directly related to the needs of their

service territory and the resources available. Following is a list of some of the functions different outreach subcommittees are performing. Few committees provide all these services, but many of them are functions of most outreach subcommittees.

- * Provide a direct line of communication to isolated members and groups, in and out of institutions.
- * Presents or take part in activities designed to bring isolated members and groups together with each other and the NA community.
- * Conduct workshops on group level service, provide orientation sessions for GSRs, and develop GSR information packets.
- * Facilitating, encouraging and improving GSR attendance at area meetings.
- * Assisting groups in need of support and group trusted servants.
- * Helping to register groups with service committees and the USSC.
- * Compiling or advising in the compilation of meeting schedules.
- * Developing or maintaining an informative map of service boundaries.
- * Encouraging members to be involved in NA service
- * Helping members and groups to learn about ordering literature and receiving NA publications.
- * Facilitating the development and availability of simplified service materials.
- * Help groups to provide for members with additional needs.

Outreach to NA Groups

To the greatest extent possible we work in teams, not alone. Two or more people visiting a struggling group can offer support during the meeting, provide information and offer suggestions in conversation with group trusted servants. Answering questions about the purpose and functions of the area and its subcommittees are often beneficial during these visits.

Assisting new groups to obtain starter materials and register with their service committees and the USSC helps them to establish communication with other NA groups in their area or region. In some places, outreach subcommittees provide a “wake-up” call a couple of days prior to the ASC to groups that haven’t attended in a while. Another service often performed by area outreach subcommittees is to provide brief training and orientation sessions for new GSRs, often done in a quick seminar format 30 minutes before an ASC meeting. The improved participation and communication that results from GSRs that know their job and how their committee works; usually helps build area unity and stability.

What Outreach Is Not

It is important to remember that the focus of outreach activities is to assist groups to sustain themselves. Outreach is not intended to be a committee that starts new meetings. For outreach committee members to become tied down supporting one meeting every week would be unfair to the area and a disservice to the group. Committee members can assist the NA members who start meetings by temporarily attending, education, starter kits, announcements, and registration. Successful outreach committees have avoided creating a

structure that fosters dependency or sets up an additional barrier to groups having direct contact with the rest of the fellowship’s service structure.

It is important for outreach members not to ‘judge’ groups in how they conduct their meetings. Outreach has sometimes, mistakenly, been perceived as an NA “police department” that presents groups with citations for traditions violations, or a “swat team” that attends meetings for the purpose of telling a group what to do. Outreach committees need to remain clear that they are trying to help the group and their mission is not to promote or enforce uniform understandings of traditions, service concepts or proper NA language. Committee members so inclined should be encouraged to trust that isolated group members will develop their own understanding of NA’s principles through increased contact with NA as a whole.

Another pitfall to avoid is identifying with any political factions. Outreach is about group service and must avoid being perceived as taking sides in local controversies. It is important in outreach visits to respect each group’s autonomy. The integrity of the outreach subcommittee depends on its ability to provide unbiased, accurate information and then step aside and let the group decide. This is particularly true when an area grows to a point where dividing into more than one area is being considered. The role of outreach in this situation is simply to strengthen groups and develop ASC unity. Outreach should support whatever process the ASC chooses to guide its future and encourage the groups to make their own choices on issues.

For these reasons, outreach subcommittees usually spend significant time discussing how to introduce themselves and clarify their function so as to avoid leaving any group feeling threatened. Outreach may visit, offer suggestions, gather information and even make recommendations. It is the responsibility of the local NA members, groups, and the service committee to address issues.

Available Resources

Outreach subcommittees have many resources to draw upon and use in their efforts. Following is a short list of available resources:

Local service committees

- Group Booklet
- Group Information Pamphlet (IP #2)
- Group Treasurers Handbook
- Outreach Bulletins (list available from USSC)
- USSC Outreach Subcommittee

Open Forum/Sharing Session

The floor should be opened to answer any questions and encourage discussion about outreach. This is also a good time to elaborate on any topics of interest and encourage participants to share about the personal rewards of outreach service.