



**Coastal Bend Area of Narcotics
Anonymous H&I Subcommittee**

Panel Member Orientation Package

By working together we can fulfill our primary purpose to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.



The time to give back is here!

PERSONAL STORY

In the beginning, jails, institutions, and death couldn't stop me from using. My bottom came when my son was sixteen years old. It was about two AM and I was in bed trying to get some sleep, staring at the ceiling, and I heard a noise in the house. I took the gun from under my pillow and started looking around the house for someone trying to break in, when the same noise came from my son's room. I went in and saw that my son had hung himself from his closet door. I cut him down and called for help. That was the last day I put a chemical in my body, the 22nd of November, 1987. I was blaming myself for my son's actions and it was my fault. I didn't know my son also had a drug problem. Being desperate, I asked for help.

Three days later I was on my way to a rehab in Pennsylvania. It was to be a five-day detox and a twenty-eight day program. It took fifteen days in detox and forty-five days in the program. I am a slow learner. One night a group of H&I members brought us an NA meeting. The main speaker spoke to us about his life, and it scared the hell out of me. I was listening to my story. That was the first time I did not feel unique; there were people out there just like me. They were getting better one day at a time. I started to change a little. I began to listen, and people told me I didn't have to use today, that the pain would go away.

Types of Treatment Facilities:

Short-term refers to detox centers, 28-day facilities and out patient facilities.

Long-term includes recovery houses and therapeutic communities, halfway or $\frac{3}{4}$ houses and psychiatric hospitals.

Types of Institutional Facilities:

Short-term, long-term and adolescent correctional facilities.

H&I Requirements

You have been invited to carry the message of recovery through H&I meetings/presentations because:

1. You have at least 6 months abstinence from all drugs.
2. You have a strong NA message of recovery from active addiction.
3. You seem willing to comply with all of the H&I subcommittee's and the facilities' requirements.
4. You are willing to carry the message in a responsible way.

Panel Member Orientation

H&I orientation is a period that allows NA members to become familiar with H&I work so they aren't rushed into it without any preparation for this service. Many people are quite apprehensive about getting into H&I for a variety of reasons. Don't be put off, everyone has something to offer.

This packet has been compiled by the Coastal Bend Area H&I Subcommittee to give a brief outline of some of the specifics that will be important for you as a panel member. The H&I Handbook gives a much more in-depth look at H&I work in Narcotics Anonymous if you decide you want to learn more about this rewarding type of service.

Many areas, as a part of orientation, bring those that are new to H&I to their first meeting/presentation or two as an observer. This will give you a chance to listen at first and see how an H&I meeting/presentation really works. Also this helps many feel more comfortable then they come join the panel.

The Meeting/Presentation Format

There are a variety of formats that we use when carrying the message into facilities, but there are some key points to keep in mind about all of them.

The format of any particular H&I meeting/presentation may vary from meeting to meeting depending on the type of facility. In short-term facilities the format will be more focused on the panel members carrying a message in to the residents, while at a long-term facility we may encourage more participation from the residents. In H&I we are carrying the message into the facility. At an H&I meeting we are not there to dump our problems but rather to help these addicts become aware of what NA is and how it works in our lives. In effect, an H&I meeting is an introduction to our fellowship for addicts.

The panel leader should let you know what the format is before the meeting/presentation and should be able to answer any questions you may have about it. If you would like to see samples of a variety of formats, there is an explanation of several of them in the H&I Handbook.

Whatever format is chosen, we normally get the residents involved with a question and answer session at some point in the meeting/presentation. Also, you may be asked to stay after the meeting for a while to talk with the residents if allowed.

Personal Commitments

Please **DO NOT** volunteer for an H&I meeting/presentation if:

1. You are not sure that you want to attend, or
2. You are not sure you will be able to attend the meeting. If something comes up and you will be unable to make it, try to give the panel leader at least 48 hours notice so that he/she can invite someone to fill your spot. **DO NOT** ask someone to take your place or even to come along with to the meeting. The panel leader is the only one that is allowed to invite people to the meeting.

DO'S & DON'TS

DO'S

- Do** Make directories of outside meetings available to residents
- Do** Clarify the facility's rules with anyone you bring in.
- Do** Try to get all agreements with the facility in writing.
- Do** Start and end on time.
- Do** Briefly explain what H&I is.
- Do** Make it clear that NA is separate and distinct from the facility as well as other fellowships.
- Do** Try to get residents involved, especially those in long-term facilities (literature person, readings, etc.)
- Do** Obey all dress codes. Exercise common sense and dress appropriately.
- Do** Keep staff aware of your whereabouts at all times.
- Do** Stamp all literature you bring into a facility with the local helpline number.
- Do** Screen all panel members carefully, especially regarding the clean time or other requirements.
- Do** Explain the language that we use ("addict", "clean", and "recovery") and why we use it (the First Step of NA and the Sixth Tradition of NA.)
- Do** Emphasize that in NA, recovery is available to any addict, regardless of "type" of drug(s) used.
- Do** Follow all security regulations at all times.
- Do** Contact the facility contact person and let them know they can purchase literature from NAWS (most jails and correctional facilities have funds available for this.) Inform the contact person that we have literature order forms available for their use.
- Do** Emphasize the importance of getting a sponsor and a home group, the ongoing nature of recovery, and the importance of attending meetings (suggest ninety meetings in ninety days.)
- Do** Use the literature recommended for H&I work, if we are supplying the literature.
- Do** Be selective about who you choose to take into H&I meetings. Clean time requirements are very important. People who sit on NA panels should be able to share a message of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

DON'TS

- Don't** Break another person's anonymity or tell his or her story.
- Don't** Debate any issues involving the facility's rules or regulations.
- Don't** Discuss conditions within the facility or opinions about staff members.
- Don't** Debate the merits of the treatment center's program or other fellowships. Remember that we have no opinions on outside issues. The best approach is to focus on the positive and unique qualities of our program. Keep you Basic Text handy and read from it. It is the foundation of our program of recovery.
- Don't** Give the residents money.
- Don't** Take a person into a correctional meeting who is on parole or probation unless they specifically get permission from the parole/probation officer and the facility.
- Don't** Take a person with outstanding warrants.
- Don't** Give anyone your personal address or phone number.
- Don't** Give or accept gifts.
- Don't** Carry letters in or out of the facility.
- Don't** Take a member who has friends or family in the facility.
- Don't** Get involved in discussion about an inmate's guilt or innocence.
- Don't** Comment on the methods used by the treatment facility. Not all facilities are Twelve Step based nor do their understandings of the Steps necessarily coincide with the understanding gained in Narcotics Anonymous. We share our experience without reference to the facility's methods or to residents' comments.
- Don't** While sharing, put too much focus on what it was like. They already know.
- Don't** Debate which drugs are acceptable. NA is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs.
- Don't** Carry excessive cash or wear expensive or flashy jewelry.
- Don't** Show favoritism to any resident(s).
- Don't** Take messages in or out of the facility.
- Don't** Give out any other person's address or phone number.
- Don't** Carry in any contraband items such as cigarettes (if applicable) or weapons.
- Don't** Rely on flooding a treatment center with literature to carry our message. The most powerful tool for carrying our message is the NA member.

Don't Read too many literature selections at the beginning of the meeting. Keep it short and simple to keep their attention.

Don't Let the meeting run too long. Most treatment center residents spend much of their day in meetings of one sort or another, often in the same room.

Don't Collect any money.

Questions and Answers

It is a good idea to encourage questions concerning what was presented at the meeting or other general questions about NA but there are a few things we should keep in mind.

Please remember that NA has no opinion on outside issues. Occasionally during the question and answer period or when talking after the meeting/presentation the residents will ask us to give an opinion on outside issues such as:

1. Other recovery programs or fellowships.
2. The facility, i.e., "Do I need to stay in treatment?"
3. Many other issues that do not pertain to recovery from addiction in the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship.

It is very important that we are not drawn into these types of discussions! Always remember to only share experience, strength and hope about YOUR recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.