



HELPLINE POLICY

REVISED OCTOBER 2023

REQUIREMENTS TO BE A VOLUNTEER:

- 1) 6 months clean time, NA sponsor, minimum of at least TWO (2) N.A. meetings attended per week.
- 2) Working knowledge of the 12 Steps and the 12 Traditions of Narcotic Anonymous
- 3) A working cell phone or home phone to have the Helpline forwarded to.
- 4) Willingness to refrain from using vulgar language. Keep language consistent with Basic Text.
- 5) No endorsements of any kind. Only give out information on Non-Endorsed **Community Referral List**

Helping members and potential members get to an N.A. meeting is our objective. Our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the suffering addict.

Most calls will be simple requests from N.A. members about meeting times and locations.

You may also receive calls from potential newcomers, relatives and friends of addicts, health care professionals, students, members of the media, etc.

POTENTIAL NEWCOMERS may ask questions that can be concisely answered by referring to excerpts from the White Book, such as Who Is An Addict? What Is The Narcotics Anonymous Program? How It Works? NEVER give out the name, address or phone number of a 12 Step volunteer or N.A. member.

IF THE CALLER HAS LEFT A MESSAGE, when returning a call, **ALWAYS** make sure that you are speaking to the person who called before identifying yourself as an N.A. member. Do NOT leave messages on a caller's voice mail. NEVER return a missed call from your Caller-ID.

When returning a call, it is best to block your number by pressing *67 before dialing the phone number. This will restrict your personal phone number. IF THE PERSON has some type of Caller-ID blocking service, that prevents restricted or blocked calls from calling through; you have no choice but to display your number.

AS A SIDE NOTE to the above mentioned, IF YOUR PHONE has Anonymous Call Rejection, or some other type of Anonymous Call Blocking Application, it is best to disable this feature during your Helpline Shift. The House Arrest people that call to verify meetings for those in need while wearing their ankle bracelet always calls from a blocked number. Please note that AT&T Privacy Manager (on a landline) can't be turned off, however this prompts a caller to say their name to connect the call. Please call your service provider for instructions on disabling Anonymous Call Rejection.

In your role as a helpline volunteer, it is imperative to remember that you are not a crisis counselor, doctor, lawyer or psychologist. The N.A. helpline is strictly for dispensing information about the N.A. fellowship, meetings and recovery. Calls that are not within this scope should be quickly and politely diverted. **IF THE CALL IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY, TELL THE CALLER TO DIAL 911. IF THE CALLER IS SUICIDAL, QUICKLY REFER THE CALLER TO A SUICIDE HELPLINE NUMBER 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)**

FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS often want someone to talk to an addict or to call an addict. We cannot do this. The addict must call the Helpline to speak with an addict. You may offer the phone numbers to groups such as Nar-Anon, or Families Anonymous after explaining that Narcotics Anonymous does not endorse or recommend any other organizations and is in no way affiliated with them, but simply offers alternative numbers for those callers who need services other than N.A. (We term these “non-endorsed referrals”). Please incorporate this disclaimer into your conversation.

Sometimes people call asking what this or that drug is like, what it does or how long it stays in their system. Tell the caller that N.A. is concerned with recovery and that you’re not qualified to give information about drugs.

Calls from healthcare professionals, students, and members of the media or community are usually requests for general information about N.A. or requests for our participation at a function. Answer any questions to the best of your ability. Make sure to get name, address and phone number of people making requests for information or directories and email our Public Relations Chair. It is important that we work within our service structure and that ALL requests for speaker, interviews, etc. be passed on the appropriate subcommittee by Charles.

Scheduling is flexible and you will be assigned a date and time for your shift. I.e.: Tuesday morning or third Wednesday night. Experience has shown that a somewhat regular commitment (i.e.: second Monday of every month, etc.) and working a full shift works best. Volunteer shifts are:

8:00 am -12:00 pm	Monday through Friday
12:00 pm - 6:00 pm	
6:00 pm - 8:00 am	
8:00 am - 6:00 pm	Saturday & Sunday
6:00 pm - 8:00 am	

YOUR COMMITMENT TO THE HELPLINE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE BACK WHAT HAS BEEN SO FREELY GIVEN TO YOU. WHEN YOU ARE SCHEDULED TO ANSWER THE HELPLINE, BE THERE! IF SOMETHING UNAVOIDABLE DOES PREVENT YOU FROM FULFILLING YOUR COMMITMENT, PLEASE CALL THE PHONELINE CHAIR WITH AS MUCH ADVANCE NOTICE AS POSSIBLE. IT IS CRITICAL THAT WHEN ANY ADDICT CALLS FOR HELP, THE CALL NOT GO UNANSWERED!!!!

Most information (meetings, events, etc.) will be found on our website: chicagona.org
Go to this website and become familiar with it. If you are unsure, please call the Helpline Chair who will be more than happy to walk you through it. Note that the website usually has the most accurate and current information regarding meetings, and events. If a caller mentions that they went to a particular meeting, and it's no longer there, or they were told by the facility that N.A. is no longer there; Call the Helpline Chair with this information so we can get it corrected ASAP.

DRIVING DISCLAIMER: The Chicagoland Helpline suggest that you do not drive & answer the helpline. In the event that you do receive a call while driving, we strongly suggest you pull over safely & then proceed with your call.

A Quick Overview:

- DO carry the message to the addict that still suffers.
- DO answer the phone "Helpline, this is _____, how may I help you?"
- DO be certain when returning a call that the person requesting help is on the line before identifying yourself as an addict or mentioning N.A.
- DO Disable any Caller-ID, Anonymous Call Rejection services while on your shift, they can be turned back on later.
- DO get familiar with our website. This is the quickest way to get the information that is required.
- DON'T return a call from a number on your caller ID. It is best that you answer all "Call Waiting" calls, even if the person you are talking to is upset. Every call is important.
- DON'T leave voice messages.
- Do make appropriate non-endorsed referrals from the **Community Referral List**.
- DO contact the Helpline Chairperson if you have any problems.
- DO leave an appropriate message on your machine / voicemail if you must leave, telling the caller "No one is available at the moment, please leave a message, or try back in a few minutes." THIS SHOULD ONLY BE DONE IN AN EMERGENCY!!
- DON'T try to persuade the caller to stop using.
- DON'T spend too much time with people who are not addicts or addicts who are high.
- DON'T try to handle calls you are not qualified to handle.
- DON'T have a person of a different sex make a 12 Step call.
- DO offer the Nar-Anon number to family members.
- DO get yourself a map or use the computer to familiarize yourself with the Chicagoland area.

GROUNDINGS FOR IMMEDIATE / POSSIBLE DISMISSAL FROM THE HELPLINE

- Lack of fulfillment to Helpline Requirements, IE: Change fellowships, Sponsor in another fellowship, less than 1 meeting attended per week.
- Using any form of verbal aggression on the phone
- Using excessive vulgarity on the phone. I don't necessarily mean a few swear words, I mean vulgarity. You should know the difference. Try to stick to language consistent with the Basic Text. Excessive use of vulgarity will constitute a warning. The second offence will be grounds for immediate dismissal.
- Flirting with a caller, giving them your phone number, offering to give a ride to a newcomer (of the opposite sex).
- Do not let others answer the Helpline during your shift, without approval of the Helpline Committee.
- Being late for your regular shifts 3 xs (without prior notice) or totally forgetting 1x without an explanation to the Helpline Committee.
- Relapse
- IF a Helpline volunteer is revealed to be using the Helpline number and/or sources for personal use; (I.E. Work references, secondary personal phone line, etc.) that volunteer will be issued a warning. Any repeated violations will result in immediate dismissal.
- Any trusted servant who has violated any of the terms of this policy will be temporarily suspended from their responsibilities until the matter is reviewed by The Helpline Committee to determine if dismissal is warranted.
- After one year of dismissal date, you are welcome to petition to get back on the Helpline Volunteer List after review by the Helpline Sub Committee at the Regional PR meeting.