



Oklahoma Eastern Area of Narcotics Anonymous Phoneline Guidelines

Introduction

Thank you for your willingness to serve on the phoneline for the Eastern Area of Narcotics Anonymous. NA's primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. One of the best ways to make ourselves available to those who need help is to provide a "Helpline" phone service where anybody can call and talk anonymously to a recovering addict. The still-suffering addict can call this number without fear of arrest, to receive information about NA meeting times and locations. Those who have served on phonelines in the past know this service saves lives. Most importantly, it keeps us clean by giving away what we have been freely given. Thank you for your time, your willingness, and your service to the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

Helpline Objectives

1. Our primary objective is to get the addict to a meeting
2. Convey that the NA program works
3. We care and are willing to help

What is the Phoneline?

Basically, the phoneline is our link to the addict on the streets. Many of the people you see in meetings today were first introduced to NA by calling us on the phone. You might say, then, that our most important function is to be at this end of the line when the addict needing help calls. There are, however, other very important functions for the phoneline:

1. A number where anybody who is not involved with NA can call and be directed to the proper source of information.
2. A number for people from in and out of town to call and inquire about meetings.
3. A contact for professionals to ensure their clients have the most up to date information regarding Narcotics Anonymous in our area.

This is a service position of great responsibility! The recovery and welfare of a suffering addict may depend on how well you are prepared to handle calls.

How the Phone Line Works

The EASC Phoneline is **888-749-0017**.

Volunteers will be asked to schedule their time on the Phoneline roster in three hour minimum blocks. It is our hope to have three volunteers on the call list twenty four hours a day for all time blocks. Once the above numbers are added as a contact on your cell phone, volunteers will recognize incoming phoneline calls. Some volunteers may even want to give this contact



a special ring-tone so you know by hearing it that it's a phonenumber call. If you are a volunteer while this call is received, you will want to answer the call ASAP.

As callers reach the phone number for Narcotics Anonymous, they will have the option to press "1" to speak with an addict in recovery. When the caller selects this option, their call will be routed to the currently scheduled volunteers. Volunteers will be organized in a "cascading" system. The caller is routed to one volunteer at a time until a volunteer 'accepts' the call. If a volunteer declines to answer the call, it will be routed to the next scheduled volunteer. When a volunteer answers the call, they will be directed to press "1" to accept the call. Hanging up *before* pressing 1 will send the caller to the next volunteer. The volunteer taking the call will then assess the call and respond appropriately.

If none of the volunteers answer a call, then the caller will be sent to a voicemail box. In that case, the Phonenumber Coordinator will receive a text that a voicemail message has been received.

Don't expect to be perfect or smooth during the first few times you answer the phone. Like anything, it will take practice and getting comfortable with the system and how we perform service.

Summary of Requirements for Phone Line Volunteers

- At least 6 months of continuous clean time and attend the EASC Phonenumber Orientation.
- Knowledge of the 12 Steps of Narcotics Anonymous
- Knowledge of the 12 Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous (e.g., the only requirement..., our primary purpose..., never endorse related facilities..., non-professional..., no opinion on outside issues..., attraction rather than promotion..., anonymity..., etc.)
- Willingness to contribute personal time during your agreed upon schedule.
- Sign up for at least one 3-hour shift per week. The Phonenumber Coordinator will rotate volunteer phone numbers in each time block to allow for the best chance for everyone to take calls.
- You must have access to the most recent Area meeting schedule or be able to search on the [EASC website meeting search](#).
- Be willing to contact the Phonenumber Coordinator if your schedule changes.
- Be willing to communicate monthly via email reconfirming your schedule and sharing basic information about your experiences.
- Be willing to give accurate information about our Fellowship — but you can always say "I don't know" if you don't know. You can take the number of the caller if they wish and have another member call them back if necessary.

As a volunteer you will probably receive several different types of calls. This phonenumber is concerned mostly with calls from addicts who need help. You will need to know what to do with other calls as well. When a person calls for information about NA, you could provide them information from the following:



A Brief Description of the Narcotics Anonymous Program

Narcotics Anonymous was founded in the early 1950's as a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women who suffered from drug addiction. Ours is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs, including alcohol. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. The program is based on a set of spiritual principles, written so simply that almost anyone can follow them in their daily lives.

NA groups meet on a regular basis to carry the message to addicts who still suffer. Group members are recovering addicts who help others in order to maintain their own recovery. This aspect of NA – one addict helping another – works when all else fails.

We are not affiliated with any other organizations. We are not connected with any political, religious or law enforcement groups. There are no dues or fees, and no promises to make to anybody. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, creed, sexual identity, religion or lack of religion.

We are not interested in what or how much the addict has used or who their connections were, what they have done in the past or their social status. We are only interested in what they want to do about their drug problem and how we can help.

We feel that our approach to the disease of addiction is both realistic and practical. NA's experience has demonstrated that the addict need not necessarily be removed from community life for successful recovery. Many of our members are achieving recovery while participating as responsible members of their community. All that is required for membership is a desire to stay clean.

Your Responsibility to Your Phonenumber Commitment

Do carry the message of NA. Remember you are likely to be the first contact a person has with NA. Please answer the phone politely.

The hours you sign-up for are **YOUR** responsibility. If you know that you won't be able to make your shift, **please** notify the Phonenumber Coordinator.

Respond to the monthly contact from the Phonenumber Coordinator. The monthly contact is our only chance to share information with each other and to receive updated material necessary for doing a good job.

If you have any questions, please contact the Phonenumber Coordinator or PR Chair. Give your shift to you Higher Power and all will be well.



NINE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT NA

There are some misconceptions about what NA does and does not do, so here are some of the things that NA does not do:

- NA does not** operate detox units, recovery or halfway houses and is not affiliated with such facilities.
- NA does not** crusade, solicit or try to persuade anyone to join.
- NA does not** engage in or sponsor research.
- NA does not** keep membership records or case histories, nor follow-up on members to control them in any way.
- NA does not** make medical or psychological diagnosis or prognosis, nor provide marriage, family or vocational counseling.
- NA does not** provide welfare or other social services.
- NA does not** conduct religious services of any kind.
- NA does not** engage in education or propaganda about drugs.
- NA does not** accept money for its services, is not funded by any public or private sources or agencies, nor accepts contributions from any non-NA source.

DO'S AND DON'TS ON THE HELPLINE

DO

1. Do carry an NA message, remember that you are likely to be the first contact the person has with NA.
2. Do encourage the addict to attend a meeting by giving them day, time, location and directions.
3. Do remember to refer the disclaimer before making any referrals. "NA is not affiliated with, nor endorses any related facility or outside enterprise. But, in the spirit of cooperation, I will refer..." (Refer from list of "Suggested Emergency numbers on the last page of these guidelines).
4. Do keep an open mind and have the willingness to learn the guidelines of the NA Helpline.

DON'T

1. Don't suggest names of hospitals, detox centers, etc – as NA does not endorse any facility.
2. Don't give medical advice.
3. Don't have long conversations on the Helpline.
4. Don't give personal opinions as you are representing Narcotics Anonymous.
5. Don't take abuse; you do have the right to hang up.



6. Don't try to persuade the caller to stop using.
7. Don't break anyone's anonymity.
- 8. Don't give out anyone's personal phone number!**
9. Don't make promises to addicts calling in about rides to a meeting, a place to stay or any other services –.
10. **Don't accept collect calls** (calls from penal institutions.)
11. Don't answer the Phonenumber if you are driving or otherwise unable to focus on responding to the caller.
12. **DON'T TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUSLY!** Your responsibility is to share your experience, strength and hope and passing out information about meeting time and location. You are the link between the addict who is calling for help and the program. It is not your responsibility to solve personal problems. When it gets to that point, you need to tell the person that you are answering a helpline and that you need to clear the line for the next caller.

RIDES & 12 STEP CALLS

The EASC Area does not try to manage rides or 12 Step calls with our phonenumber. This is something that groups or individuals within EASC may choose to do. If a phonenumber volunteer wishes to participate in giving rides or making 12 Step visits, please do so separately from your EASC Phonenumber commitment. Again, our primary phonenumber goal is to help them find a meeting.

WHEN AN ADDICT CALLS

Your Primary Objective Is To Get Them To A Meeting

Your caller may have some knowledge of what NA is; they may just want to know where the meetings are. They may just want to know what NA is. Answer the questions from your own experience. For example, "All kinds of people go to NA" or "We help each other with recovery from addiction".

Be Compassionate

Listen to what the addict is saying; **do not** talk down at them. Allow the time they need to ask questions, or to discuss the problem they are having. Ask once again what you can do to help.

Let Them Know You Care

Acknowledge that you have heard what they have said, and that you are concerned. Respond empathetically and share some of your experience, strength and hope. Share about recovery in your life. Share that there is a life after drugs; things do get better. Do not be judgmental. Do not get hung up in war stories. After you have listened to the addict and told them that you know how they feel, discuss NA with them. NA is about one addict helping another. Let the caller know that this call is the first step to recovery, if they want it.



“I’m Too Sick”

If the addict needs to detox, provide the number of the agency in your referral list, or refer them to the local yellow pages. Do not hang up until you’ve done all you can. Even if it means just listening.

I’m Too Crazy, Too Messed Up”

Say, “I felt that way too”. You are trying to get the addict to agree to attend a meeting, where the miracle happens. If after repeated tries the addict is still resistant ask them to call back whenever they feel like attending a meeting. Conclude the call.

A Final Word

Some of your callers will be very loaded and some may even be belligerent. Try to keep in your mind that you are planting a seed. Don’t argue; don’t call them names or lecture. You’ll want this to be a positive experience because it’s probably their first experience with Narcotics Anonymous. Even if they don’t get clean today, it may be this conversation that eventually gets them to our doors.

CRISIS SITUATION

Keep It Simple

We are an information service only, and are not qualified to handle emergency or crisis situations. We do not give medical diagnosis or medical advice.

The minute you receive the call, find out if it is an emergency situation (medical, domestic or other) and, if so, what is the nature of the emergency. Has the caller overdosed? Try to get the caller’s phone number and address, urge them to call 911 for medical assistance. If you feel that further follow up is necessary you may call 911 to verify that a call has been made.

Overdose?

If the call is from a family or friend, and the addict has overdosed, have the caller call 911 for assistance. Ask the caller to please call back after the crisis has passed so that we may direct them to a meeting, if necessary.

RELATIVES, FRIENDS, LOVERS AND OTHERS

Addiction is a disease that affects the whole family or environment where a using addict lives. Therefore, many calls come from families and friends of addicts. NA does not deal with these problems. However, by listing ourselves in the telephone directory we invite calls from the public. We ought to treat callers well and talk to anyone who reaches out for help. Families and friends of addicts often feel isolated and ashamed. It is important to take a little time with these people because they may be reaching out for the first time. They need and deserve encouragement.

These are the people who are in direct contact with the addict and affected most by their chemical use. These callers should be informed briefly about the program of NA. You have been provided with a few phone numbers that you can give to the caller. Maybe the caller is looking for family support groups. Ask the person on the phone if they would be interested in one of those numbers. Someone there may be able to help



As recovering addicts, we know that the pain the caller is experiencing is very real. Be compassionate. After offering the caller phone numbers for 12 step programs for families of addicts (be sure to tell them we're not affiliated), ask this question, "Does the addict want help?" **If so, have the addict call us.** If not, explain to the caller that even though you do sympathize, there's nothing NA can do to help.

DRUG IDENTIFICATION REQUESTS

Do not attempt to identify any drugs over the telephone; if you make a mistake somebody could be hurt and you or NA could be held responsible. **Your most important function is to help the addict who still suffers.**

PUBLIC RELATIONS CALLS

Professionals

This includes: parole and probation officers, therapists and counselors, doctors and nurses, minister and clergymen who want information about Narcotics Anonymous. Our information pamphlets and books will contain most of the information they need for an understanding of the program.

If you wish, you may read them "A Brief Description of Narcotics Anonymous" from page 2 of this manual. Anything that you cannot answer, please, take the callers' name and address and refer them to the Public Relations chairperson. Please encourage these people to attend an open NA meeting. **Check your directory -some meetings are closed – which means only addicts are welcome to attend.**

Speakers!

Usually such requests come from schools, churches and civic groups who want a member of Narcotics Anonymous to speak to their group. Even if the caller is calling because they want a panel to come to their facility, the Public Relations and the Eastern Area Service Committee have policies and procedures to handle such requests. Again, take the callers' name, phone number and nature of their request and pass this information onto the Public Relations chairperson as soon as possible.

If you get a call for directories or any request for Public Relations about Narcotics Anonymous, contact the PR chairperson. Get the following information to give to the PR chairperson:

- What is the call about?
- Name of the person calling?
- Place the person is affiliated with?
- Phone number?

Do not give out PR Chair's contact or personal info!



MEDIA CALLS

All calls from the newspapers, radio or television stations should be referred to the Public Relations chairperson. **Do not** attempt to deal with these people on your own. Again, take the caller's name and number and refer them to the Public Relations Chair **Do not give out Chair or Vice-Chair's contact or personal info!**

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. *Does NA consider alcohol a drug?*
 - Yes we do.
2. *Is the "bottom" different for alcohol than for drugs?*
 - For each of us, our "bottom" is an individual experience. These experiences are different for each and every addict. The one common link is we all feel there is no where left for us to go. We can't go on living as we have been living.
3. *Is drug addiction hereditary?*
 - NA does not have an opinion on this topic. This is something that scientists and doctors could answer better than we can. It really does not matter; we are all responsible for our own recovery.
4. *Aren't nicotine and caffeine drugs?*
 - Although it can be argued that nicotine and caffeine are mood or mind altering drugs, we believe that each individual member of NA must make their own decision whether or not the use of these substances is acceptable. We believe that an NA member can still be clean and maintain a spiritual program while drinking coffee and tea or smoking cigarettes. We don't believe this is possible by still using marijuana or liquor, for example.
5. *Do you also recognize (gambling, excessive shopping, overeating, obsessive compulsive behavior) as addiction?*
 - When we refer to addiction, we refer to the obsessive and compulsive use of drugs. Our meetings are for those persons who have a problem with drugs.
6. *I believe in NA and want to help you. What can I do?*
 - We appreciate your interest in NA, but we do not accept outside contributions nor do we have non-addict volunteers in our Fellowship. The best thing you can do to help us is to advise a person with drug problems that NA is here, that we are free and that we might be able to help that person.
7. *NA, AA, CA ... aren't they all the same? What's the difference?*
 - The similarities of all these Fellowships are the 12 steps, the core of our programs. The difference is our first step, where we state that we are "**powerless over our addiction**", whereas other Fellowships address other drugs specifically. We have our own literature and program, which makes us what we are, and that is what makes us attractive to the addict seeking recovery.
8. *How can I tell if someone is an addict?*



- We don't give that kind of advice to others on this topic. We don't even tell people who come to our meetings whether they are an addict or not. We allow them the opportunity to know for themselves if they are an addict. We do have a pamphlet titled "[Am I an Addict?](#)" The person who reads it can answer for themselves whether they have a drug problem and may possibly be an addict.
9. *How can I tell if someone is under the influence of drugs?*
- NA does not have an opinion on this topic. This is something doctors can answer better than we can.
10. *What's the difference between drug use and drug abuse?*
- NA is a Fellowship of men and women for whom drugs have become a problem. We cannot tell if someone is a social user or an addict. This is up to the individual person.
11. *How can I get someone to stop using drugs?*
- From our personal experiences, you can't stop a drug addict from using. They will only stop when they have the desire to stop and seek help. NA does not do drug "interventions", nor do we advise family members, friends or employers on how to deal with the using addict.
12. *What should I do if I find drugs in my home or at work?*
- We do not give advice on this topic. You'll have to deal with your own conscience as a family member and a member of society.
13. *I know someone who is (deaf or blind or disabled) but refuses to go to your meetings. Is there anything you can do for them?*
- Depending on the situation, (deaf or blind or disabled) you may answer like this: "We have special materials for this type of person with [audio tapes of our Basic Text and Braille editions of our pamphlets] or [we have meetings that has handicapped access at locations]. It is always difficult for an addict to attend an NA meeting for the first time due to feelings of separation and shame. Especially in a situation where the person has a physical challenge in receiving our message of recovery.
14. *Do you verify attendance at your meetings? Can I check if my (friend, husband, employee, etc.) is really going to your meetings?*
- No, NA does not verify the attendance of addicts at meetings. However, as a courtesy to those persons attending our open meetings, because of legal issues or for treatment, some of our groups will allow a group member to initial a form provided by the attendee.
15. *What's the difference between NA and drug treatment centers? NA and Psychotherapy?*
- NA is a non-profit organization, which charges no fees or dues to its members. We do not have medical staff or professional counselors to treat or advise our members. We do not present ourselves as professionals to the addict that comes to us seeking recovery. We offer ourselves, as addicts, the same as



- them, who have learned how to stop using drugs, lost the desire to use drugs and have found a new way to live.
16. *Is the (_____) treatment center any good?*
- We have no opinion nor endorse any organization, treatment center or hospital programs. We do have some of our meetings/panels in treatment centers, hospitals, or institutions to carry our message of recovery to the addict within them.
17. *If a person is under the influence of drugs can they participate in NA meetings?*
- We do not exclude an addict who may be under the influence of drugs at our meetings. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. Some groups, however, do not allow the active participation in their meetings such as sharing or holding a position of service. Most groups ask that if a person has used within the last 24 hours that they refrain from sharing and that they speak to someone after the meeting if they need to talk.
18. *What can we do to prevent our (children, employees, friends, etc.) from becoming drug addicts?*
- We cannot give you advice about this topic of concern. We would all like to know the answer to that question. Our fellowship is not about preventing people from becoming addicts. We are about helping those men and women who cannot live life without using drugs.
19. *What should I expect when I go to my first NA meeting? Do I have to talk?*
- Typically, a leader or chairperson will conduct the meeting. There is usually time for participation in which members share about their experience, strength, and hope with staying clean. You do not have to speak during the meeting if you don't want to. We encourage you to get there a little early so that you can speak with some of the members and pick up some literature before the meeting starts.
20. *How much do you charge for your services?*
- We charge no fees or dues for our services nor do we accept outside contributions. NA is supported by the individual member through donations and sales of literature.
21. *Does NA offer rides to meetings?*
- As an Area, EASC does not manage a 12 Step or ride call list. Many groups will have individuals who are willing to give rides. The best way to investigate potential rides is to attend a meeting.
22. *How do you deal with the mentally ill addicts?*
- We do not exclude addicts who may be mentally ill at our meetings; we realize that this is a mental, physical and spiritual disease.
23. *So you refer addicts to detox centers? Which are the best ones?*
- NA does not refer addicts to any outside organizations nor do we endorse any of those organizations. We do, however, cooperate with those that cooperate with us. (Refer to the disclaimer and the 800# for detox and recovery centers).



24. *Does NA operate any treatment centers or detoxification services to addicts?*
 - No.
25. *Do you have information about (AA, CA, Al-Anon or other 12 Step programs)?*
 - We only have information about our Fellowship. We are not affiliated with any other program. We can only suggest that you check the telephone book or an informational referral agency.
26. *What about using drugs while you're pregnant?*
 - We are not doctors and cannot advise you on this topic.
27. *Are your meetings confidential? Is that legal?*
 - We try our best to be confidential and respectful of anonymity. However, we cannot fully guarantee confidentiality or full anonymity in the community nor do we have a legal right to confidentiality such as a doctor or an attorney has.
28. *Do you have counselors? Is that a "sponsor"?*
 - We do not have professional counselors in NA. A "sponsor" is a NA member with experience in working the 12 Steps of Narcotics Anonymous who advises a NA member how to participate in the 12 steps of recovery.
29. *Do you test or certify that addicts are clean of drugs?*
 - We do not test, certify or guarantee any member is clean from drugs.
30. *I'm not an addict, but can I attend your meetings?*
 - We have meetings that are open to the public and are listed as such in our meeting directory. We do ask that you respect our closed meetings that are for *addicts only* and for those who believe that they have a problem with using drugs.
31. *How long do you have to attend meetings before you are cured?*
 - For ourselves only, we do not believe that we are ever cured from the disease of addiction. We believe this is a lifelong issue. Going to meetings is part of our program and we are encouraged to attend them regularly.
32. *Do you have special meeting for (youths, homosexuals, HIV positive addicts, etc.)?*
 - Our area supports specific orientation meetings...refer to our printed meeting list.
33. *Do you help addicts get (jobs, social welfare assistance, education, housing or health services)?*
 - NA is not a social service but a 12-step fellowship.

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SUGGESTED LIST OF EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Center for Substance Abuse Hotline (Detox/Recovery)	(800) 662-4357
Community Help	211
Suicide Prevention Hotline	(800) 273-8255
County/Statewide Emergency	911

OTHER CONTACTS

EASC Website	www.eascna.org
EASC PR Chair	pr@eascna.org
EASC Phonenumber Coordinator	phone@eascna.org
OK Region Website	www.okna.org
Western Area of Oklahoma (OKC) website	www.wascokna.org
Western Area of Oklahoma (OKC) phonenumber	(405) 524-7068 or (866) 524-7068
NAR-ANON	www.nar-anon.org (800) 477-6291
Show Me Region of NA (Missouri)	www.missourina.org
Mid-America Region of NA (Kansas)	www.marscna.net
NAWS PR Manual Chap 9 - Phonenumber Resources	www.na.org/phonelineresources
NAWS Phonenumber Basics	https://www.na.org/admin/include/spaw2/uploads/pdf/PR/PRBasics_2023.pdf