

Introduction

Thank you for your willingness to serve on the Finger Lakes Area Helpline. This is an exciting adventure for our Area. For many years we have paid an outside vendor to answer our calls to Narcotics Anonymous. Now, we are embarking on a new service, one that provides more accurate information and puts us volunteers in touch with more callers. Those who serve on the helpline 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 were once suffering ourselves and now we are clean and in recovery
4. We care and are willing to help
5. For more information, visit www.flana.net or www.na.org

Honesty, trust, and goodwill are the foundation of our service efforts, all of which rely upon the guidance of a loving Higher Power.

Who We Serve

Our commitment is to serve the addict who still suffers. We hope by offering each volunteer of the FLASCNA PR Helpline this information, we, as a special project, will better perform the task given to us by the Finger Lakes Area of Narcotics Anonymous. continuing to investigate and evaluate our services in order to provide the best information possible

- To ensure that each volunteer of the FLASCNA Helpline has the information and training necessary to be confident and concise in the Narcotics Anonymous message that they carry to those who call (877)266-3660. Save all of this in your phone as “NA Helpline” so you know to answer any of them.

And finally, our commitment is to the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous in helping each other better understand the Traditions of NA. And through that understanding, we will know how to interact with people that may or may not be seeking recovery from the disease of addiction and be a source of hope in our Area.

Summary of Requirements for Helpline Volunteers

The following is a summary of requirements that will help you answer that question. The rest of this orientation booklet will give you more detailed information.

- You must have at least 1 year of continuous clean time to answer.
- Sign up for at least one 3 hour shift per week.

- You must understand that the main purpose of the helpline is to get the caller to a meeting, not to provide extended listening sessions.
- You must have a printed copy at hand of the most recent Finger Lakes Area meeting schedule during your assigned shift.
- You will contact the Helpline scheduler if your schedule changes.
- You must reply to emails each month confirming your schedule and answer some simple questions about your experience being a volunteer.
- You must not answer the Helpline if you are driving or otherwise unable to read the regional meeting schedule.
- You will always give accurate information about our Fellowship – but you will remember to say “I don’t know” if you don’t know.
- You will never give out medical, psychiatric, or other professional advice, even if you are one of these professionals.
- You will be polite, courteous and professional and remember to be respectful about people’s problems no matter what they are.

HELPLINE

Overview

The Finger Lakes Area of NA Helpline is an automated phone system that provides callers with recorded information about NA meeting schedules and other NA services as well as to be able to connect directly to a NA Helpline volunteer. Callers will have a push button choice of options to receive information about NA or talk to a volunteer of the NA Helpline. Callers can listen to messages to find out meeting times and locations, hear recorded information about the NA program.

The Helpline’s objectives are:

1. Our primary objective is to get the addict to a meeting
2. Convey that the NA program works
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The purpose of the Finger Lakes Area NA Helpline is first and foremost a public relations opportunity. Each Helpline volunteer as well as the recordings themselves either directly or indirectly represent Narcotics Anonymous. The more accurate the information we provide, and the more courteous and professional our direct interaction is with the individual caller, the more our reputation is enhanced. Conversely, the more inaccurate our information, and the less professional our conversation, the more our reputation is tarnished.

NA Helpline volunteers are the voice of Narcotics Anonymous each time one of us picks up the phone. This responsibility, and ultimately this gift, should be taken with great care and gratitude for what we have been given. We are all humbled by our

fellowship's willingness to be of service.

Do's and Don't's

The Do's

DO: Answer the phone with the following greeting: "Hello, this is Narcotics Anonymous. I'm _____ and I'm an addict. How can I help you?" Always be professional and sound that way.

DO: Always have the following materials at hand during your shift:

- Current Printed Finger Lakes Area Meeting Schedule or Open to Web-based List
- Helpline Orientation Packet & Resource List

DO: Answer the helpline during your scheduled shift, but NOT if you are driving or do not have the materials at hand listed above.

DO: Remember to tell the Helpline scheduler if your schedule changes or you have difficulties with your phone. Email is preferred method of communication.

DO: Find out what the caller needs/wants right away – ask questions till you find out what they want.

DO: Remember that our PRIMARY GOAL is to direct callers to meetings.

DO: Tell them about Narcotics Anonymous, not our personal stories though sharing our brief experiences can be very powerful to the caller.

DO: Remember to say often, "If you check out a NA meeting you'll be able to determine if NA is for you." Or, "maybe you could give NA a try and see for yourself."

DO: Familiarize yourself with Finger Lakes Area List. We will provide you with a list sorted by city and another list sorted by day. This is for your convenience in giving information to the caller. The database on www.flana.net can also be useful in locating a meeting nearest to the caller. If you have questions about how to use the online list or the printed lists, let us know.

DO: Remember to consult the most current version of the finger Lakes Area Meeting List.

DO: Remember to be helpful and polite to all callers regardless of their attitude.

DO: Make appropriate referrals when necessary – remember we never endorse any other.

DO: Contact your Helpline scheduler if problems arise. You can reach them by email at pr@flana.net.

DO: Know and apply the Traditions in all your interactions with callers.

DO: Always give accurate information about our Fellowship – but remember to say "I don't know" if you don't know.

DO: Remember, our helpline is a community service NOT A CRISIS LINE.

DO: Remember to respond to the monthly check-in email to confirm your

availability.

The Don't's

DON'T: Never answer the phone if you are driving or you're unable to give accurate meeting schedule information. Let someone else on the shift take the call.

DON'T: Never correct a caller if they do not use NA terminology.

DON'T: Never argue with people even if they try to do draw you into an argument or especially those whose views of addiction differ from NA's. If the caller does not want to stop using, do not try to persuade him/her to stop. Encourage them to check out a meeting so they can decide for themselves. Try to get off the call so you can help someone else.

DON'T: Never handle calls you are not qualified to answer. Don't give medical advice. Do not counsel or advise anyone on anything other than trying to get them to a meeting. If the call is an emergency, direct them to call 911 or transfer to Resource List.

DON'T: Never call back a missed Helpline call.

DON'T: Never try to SOLVE the caller's problems – Your goal is to get them to a meeting.

DON'T: Never suggest meeting someone or agree to meet someone off the Helpline ALONE. Get them to a meeting and meet them AT the meeting.

DON'T: Never give anyone a ride to a meeting ALONE. Use the Community Resource Directory to give them where to find bus, train, or taxi information. Tell them if they get to a meeting someone at the meeting will likely give them a ride home.

DON'T: If someone is obviously high, suggest they go to a meeting, but if that doesn't work, ask them to call back when they are not using or when they want to go to a meeting.

DON'T: Never give out other people's names or telephone numbers.

DON'T: Never answer questions about who was at an NA meeting (e.g., to police officers, probation officers, or significant others). However, general information may be given about NA – See the pamphlet Information about NA or Little White Booklet.

DON'T: Never be rude, short, disrespectful, or never use any foul language or profanity.

DON'T: Do not assume you know what the caller needs. Give them space to ask for what they need. Ask questions till you know what they need.

DON'T: Never guess the answer to a question. If you do not know, tell the caller you do not know.

DON'T: Never glorify addiction by telling war stories.

How to Handle Special Calls

A Narcotics Anonymous phone line is strictly for dispensing information about the NA Fellowship, NA meetings, and recovery. The volunteer must remember that they are only a recovering addict sharing their experience, strength, and hope. As volunteers, we are not professional crisis counselors, doctors, or psychologists, etc., and do not have the right to give professional advice. Callers with issues that are beyond the boundaries of Narcotics Anonymous should be quickly and politely given an appropriate referral number for the Community Service Resource List.

Before providing any other referral number, always explain that Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with, nor recommends, any other organizations, institutions, emergency services, agencies, or programs. We simply provide alternate telephone numbers for those callers who need services other than NA.

COMMUNITY REFERRAL

If this is an emergency, please hang up and dial 9-1-1. The following is our community referral list. Narcotics Anonymous does not endorse any of these organizations. We simply provide them as a resource.

- For an emergency, dial 911
- For a wide variety of referrals including crisis, transportation, legal, and others, dial 211

Common Calls and Best Answers

The following section outlines common types of calls. Each call is a theme and there will always be variations on each theme. We will role play some of these scenarios during the training.

This is a good time to remember the purpose of the Helpline.

1. Our primary objective is to get the addict to a meeting
2. The NA program works
3. We were once suffering ourselves and now we are clean and in recovery
4. We care and are willing to help
5. For more information, visit www.flana.net

Our tone of voice is just as important as the words we use. We acknowledge what the caller is saying and feeling. Do not use judgmental words or preach to the caller. It is important to keep in mind that calls may not follow exactly the dialogue detailed in this section. However, familiarity with this information will make it easier to respond appropriately and to serve within the spirit of the Twelve Traditions of NA.

Q: "I've been using [smoking pot] for three years and I'm not sure if I am an addict. Can NA help?"

A: "We suggest attending an NA meeting and speaking with some of the members there. Because NA meetings are a safe place, newcomers are encouraged to ask questions. Also, read some of our literature, which is available at most NA meetings or at www.na.org, and decide for yourself. The informational

pamphlet “Am I an Addict” can be especially useful to someone who isn’t sure if they are an addict. Can I direct you to a meeting near you?”

Q: “I think I may have a drug problem. My life is a mess. I need to go to NA/Do I need to go to NA?”

A: “I’m glad you called. Narcotics Anonymous has helped me and thousands of others stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way of life. I can help you find a meeting. Whereabouts are you?” [Direct them to a meeting near them]

NOTE: Find out if the caller wants to stop using. If the answer is yes, and he/she would like to hear about recovery from drug addiction, feel free to share a brief introduction of the NA program. Avoid using NA “jargon” such as “it works when you work it”. Suggest an appropriate meeting location for the addict to find out more.

If the caller isn’t ready, remember, “An addict who does not want to stop using will not stop using. They can be analyzed, counseled, reasoned with, prayed over, threatened, beaten or locked up but they will not stop until they want to stop.”

Q: “I heard that pot isn’t addictive. Yet I want to stop. Can NA help?”

A: “We suggest attending an NA Meeting and speaking to some of the members there. Give it a try and see if NA can help. We believe that addiction is not only about the drugs we used, but also about how we felt and our behaviors. NA is a non-specific drug recovery program. If you would like to give it a try, I can help you find a meeting. Where are you located?”

Q: “I am getting drug-tested by my parole officer; how long does cocaine stay in your system?”

A: “Narcotics Anonymous is a twelve-step fellowship for those who think they may have a problem with drugs. We are a self-help, recovery-oriented organization and employ no medical professionals. We do not give any medical advice or opinions, but we do help addicts find recovery through the NA program.”

Q: “What should I expect when I go to my first NA meeting? Do I have to talk?”

A: “Typically a more experienced member 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.”

Q: “How much does NA cost? Are you counselors?”

A: “NA is free. There are no fees or dues to be a member of NA. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using. We are not professional counselors; we are recovering addicts who share our experience to help each other stay clean.”

Q: “I am a nurse by profession and I want to get clean. Where can I find a nurses’

meeting?”

A: “Some areas around the country have common needs meetings like those for professionals while others do not. Finger Lakes Area currently does not have a professional or nurses-specific NA meeting. We can tell you, however, that recovering addicts from all types of professions attend our meetings. Can I help you find a meeting near you?”

Q: “I’d like to go to an NA meeting but I don’t have a car. Can you help?”

A: “No, NA does not offer transportation services but our community resource listing has bus, train and taxi information so you can see which buses travel near or past the meeting. If you can get yourself to the meeting, it is usually possible to ask for a ride home from one of the members afterward.”

Q: “I’m going to kill myself; I don’t want to live anymore. What should I do?”

A: “We strongly suggest contacting the suicide prevention number, which is 211 or 911 to get immediate assistance.”

NOTE: If someone calls and is suicidal or has an emergency, refer them to either 911 or the Suicide and Crisis Hotline. If someone calls and is afraid they have taken an overdose or otherwise life-threatening dose, refer them to 911 or the Poison Control. We are not professionals; therefore, we are not trained to give medical or crisis advice. We must refer callers in crisis to the appropriate agencies. Do not try to handle crisis calls by yourself. You are only an addict, regardless of what you do for a living (i.e., doctor, nurse, counselor, therapist, etc.). In this situation, you are simply a member of NA, and you are representing the Fellowship. Remember: We deal with suffering addicts. If we were to call the police (or 911) without their permission, we are most likely setting someone up for an arrest. Encourage them to get the appropriate help they need.

Common Calls from Loved Ones

Q: “My boyfriend/girlfriend/wife/husband is using drugs, stealing, and cheating. What can I do to help him? Will you call him?”

A: “Because Narcotics Anonymous is a self-help program, addicts themselves must have the desire to stop using. Once he/she is ready to stop using drugs, please have him/her call us so we can direct him/her to an NA meeting in his area. In the meantime, you may want to call Nar-Anon, Al-Anon, or Families Anonymous. Although we are not affiliated with these organizations, we are happy to provide their telephone numbers.”

Q: “My son/daughter is using drugs and wants to stop taking drugs. Can I go with him/her to their first meeting?”

A: “You may attend an “open” NA meeting with your son/daughter. Open meetings welcome family members and the community at large. Closed meetings are for addicts only. Let me check our meeting list, so I can give you several choices of open meetings”

Q: “Will you call me if my son/daughter does not show up to meetings regularly?”

A: “No, we are not able to do this. Narcotics Anonymous does not keep membership lists, there are no pledges to sign, not promises to make to anyone. It is not our position to monitor an addict’s willingness to attend or not to attend meetings. Can I help you with anything else?”

Common Calls from Community Members

Q: “I heard that my old friend, Jane Smith, is in NA. Can I have her phone number?”

A: “We are not at liberty to give out contact information for individuals who may or may not be members.”

Q: “Drugs are being sold in my apartment complex. Can you come and arrest them?”

A: “Narcotics Anonymous is a twelve-step fellowship for those who think they may have a problem with drugs. We are a self-help, recovery-oriented organization and employ no law enforcement professionals. I’m sorry but I cannot help you with that. Can I help you with anything else today/tonight?”

NOTE: When someone calls with a drug tip, advise them that we are a program for addicts seeking recovery from the disease of addiction. We are not affiliated with any outside organizations or law enforcement agencies. Do NOT advise them to call the police.

Common Calls from Professionals

Q: “I am Jane Smith and I am a counselor at the Last Stop on the Left Treatment facility. I would like someone to come and speak to our clients about Narcotics Anonymous.”

A: “I can help you with that. Could I have your name again, address, city, your email address and your phone number? Did you say you want a regular speaker or just a one-time presentation? Great. Thank you. Someone will contact you in the next couple of days.” [Take down the information accurately and email the information to pr@flana.net]

Q: “I am Joe Smith and I am the Administrator at Prairie Drive Treatment Facility. Could I get a copy of your meeting schedule?”

A: “Yes, no problem. What is your name again? Your address? City? Email address (take down accurately, read it back to her/him)? Phone number? We will send you a copy of the meeting schedule regularly as it changes often. Feel free to look meetings up at www dot naminnnesota dot org. Thank you for your request.” [Take down the information and email it to pr@flana.net]

Other Types of Calls

Q: “Hi, this is Steve from the Florida Region. I’m looking for Greta P. to come and speak at our convention. Could I have her name and number?”

A: “I’m sorry, I can’t give out any information about anyone in Narcotics

Anonymous. It is not our policy to take personal messages, but I can try. Could I have your name, phone, and email address and I'll do the best I can. I can't promise anything." [Take down information and email it to pr@flana.net]

Q: "Hi, this is Rhonda, and I'm an addict. I'm looking for Sarah. Could I get her number?"

A: "Hi Rhonda. I'm sorry, but it is not our policy to take personal messages. Also, I cannot give out contact information. Is there anything else I can help you with?"

Q: "Hi, this is Matilda and I was looking for NA events that are happening in finger Lakes this weekend. Can you tell me what's happening?"

A: "Hi Matilda. Do you have access to the internet? No? Let me pull that information up at www.flana.net. [Click on events]

Q: "Hi, this is Rochelle and I'm the contact person for the Granite Falls Tuesday night NA meeting. I have a change to the meeting schedule. We're meeting at 8 PM now, not 7:00 PM. Can you make that change?"

A: "Hi Rochelle. Let me get that information. What's your email address and phone number? Which meeting? What was the change again? Great. I'll send that information in. If you ever need to change meeting information, just email it to pr@flana. Thank you. [Email meeting schedule changes to pr@flana.net]

Calls in General

The following is some information about how to handle various types of calls that is not in script format.

• Talking to a Potential Addict

o Listen and respond to the caller. A suffering addict probably will indicate that he/she wants information or help.

• Addict Wants Information About NA

o Answer the caller's questions. If you sense that the caller wants more, ask, "Do you have any more questions about Narcotics Anonymous?" After the caller has asked all his/her questions, and if you sense the caller wants to continue the conversation, then respond, "It sounds like you are really hurting. I know the desperation that you must be feeling. Do you want help to quit using drugs?" The addict will indicate if he/she wants help. Then direct them to a meeting.

• Addict Interested IS NOT Ready For Help

o Conclude the call by saying, "When you are ready, we are here to help you. Our program works for those who want to stop using. Always remember there is a way out."

• Addict Interested and IS Ready For Help

o If the caller wants help that is beyond the scope of services that NA can provide (e.g, detox, treatment information, etc.), furnish one or more

telephone numbers from the Community Services Resources List. Be familiar with “How to Handle Special Calls”. Do not hang up until you are fairly sure you have done all you can for this caller. If it is not a crisis call, listen to the caller and express your concern. But ask questions to see if they are ready for help. Remember, your job is to get them to a meeting, NOT counsel them.

- **Addict Wants To Stop Using Or Is Not Sure**

- o Respond empathetically. Share BRIEFLY about what it was like, what happened, and what it is like today for you. You might sum it up by saying, “There was a time in my life that I thought I’d never be able to quit using drugs. However, since I found NA I haven’t had to use. Would you like to go to an NA meeting?”

- **Refer Addict To A Meeting**

- o Give the caller information (time, location, and directions if needed) about the next available meeting. Take a few moments and explain to the caller what he/she can expect at a meeting. Include the structure/format of the meeting (e.g., speaker, topic discussion, Basic Text study, etc if known.). It is helpful to go into a little detail to make them feel as comfortable as possible. Conclude the call by saying, “To Get the most out of the meeting, try to get there a few minutes early. If you need further help, give us a call again. You’ve done the right thing by calling us. IF APPLICABLE: I will/won’t be at the meeting-I’m looking forward to meeting you.”

- **Addict Won’t Go To A Meeting**

- o Ask them, “Why not?” The following are examples of ways to respond to excuses for not going to a meeting. The addict’s questions and statements may sound like he/she is not ready yet, but remember that the caller has already expressed that he/she needs help. Our intention is to help the caller focus on the solutions, rather than the problems keeping him/her from attending NA meetings.
- o If the caller is on guard, “What happens at a meeting?” Respond, “We are a group of clean addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. Addicts share about what it was like and what life is like today. You aren’t required to do or say anything.”
- o If the caller presents obstacles, “My car doesn’t work” etc. Respond, “Does this problem have a solution?” Or, “Some of our meetings are on bus lines (depending on their location).”
- o If the caller uses his/her children for an excuse, “I don’t have anyone to take care of my children,” respond, “If you have to, you can bring them to an open meeting. If they are school age, you can attend daytime meetings.”
- o If the caller says they are too scared respond, “You’re not alone. During my first meeting I felt so self-conscious I was afraid to say anything. You

don't need to worry, we're all pretty friendly." If the caller says they are still using, "I can't stay clean long enough to go to a meeting," respond "If you want to stop using, then you are welcome. We only ask that you not have any drugs or paraphernalia with you during the meeting. But you are not required to be clean at the meeting. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using."

o If the caller says they are too hopeless, "It won't work for me. I'm too far gone." Respond, "I felt that way too, however, with the help of NA, I have a choice today." If the caller has other excuses, "I can't go because I have family or work obligations; my wife/husband doesn't approve; etc." Respond "It sounds like if you don't get help you may not be able to keep your job, family, etc."

o After discussing the caller's reasons for not going to a meeting and some possible solutions, ask the caller, "Do you want to go to a meeting."

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- For a wide variety of referrals including crisis, transportation, legal, and others, dial 211