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To: Conference Participants
From: World Board
Date: 25 January 2008
Re: Service Pamphlets

Greetings to conference participants.

We are sending you this material about service pamphlets in preparation for discussion at the upcoming conference. While these items are being sent along with the Conference Approval Track material in order to save mailing costs, they should not be considered CAT material. These pieces are *not* up for approval at the conference; they are included here to help conference participants think concretely about the issues related to the development, content, and approval of service pamphlets. We look forward to hearing your thoughts at WSC 2008.

The Origin of “Service Pamphlets”

As most of you know, the distinct category of service pamphlets came into being after the last World Service Conference. Among the many things discussed at the conference was the lack of flexibility in our literature development process, that it can take as long to develop a short pamphlet on a service related topic as it does to produce a lengthy piece on a recovery topic (years). In an effort to create a more nimble process, the conference passed a motion “to allow the World Board to develop and approve service-related information pamphlets and tools for distribution to the fellowship.” This new process gives world services a more timely way to disseminate material generated from fellowship discussions and to meet the needs of groups and committees looking for information and resources to help them with their more immediate challenges. Ideally, the development of these pamphlets is collaborative and ongoing. Fellowship need and discussion can lead to the creation or revision of a piece at any time. The 2008 *CAR* reports on our early efforts to produce service pamphlets and some of the questions that were raised as a result.

The Difficulty Defining “Service” Material

Perhaps the biggest question that has come up for us has to do with the category itself: What makes a “service pamphlet” a “service pamphlet”? We found it difficult at times to draw a clear line between recovery literature or topics and service literature or topics. We grappled with this distinction and found ourselves “stuck” repeatedly. We weren’t sure how we’d categorize some pieces (recovery material? service material? some other name?) or what would be the most fitting approach for their development and approval.

Many items seem relatively easy to categorize, but for each item that seems clear, there are other items that seem to fall into a grey area. Some things are clearly “service” materials. *Group Trusted Servants: Roles and Responsibilities* and *Group Business Meetings*, for instance, two of the service pamphlets we released in 2007, were both intended to be used by groups to help their meetings and business meetings run more smoothly. Other items, however, can be more ambiguous, or harder to define. Another of those first five service pamphlets, *An Introduction to NA Meetings*, was also intended to help groups function more effectively, particularly when facing challenges such as an influx of court-ordered attendees. The use of this pamphlet is, in this way, service-related, but the audience or intended reader is not the group as a whole. The pamphlet is really geared toward a newcomer or potential member of NA.

However, we found in our discussions that consideration of intended use and/or audience—for whom the pamphlet is written—is not always helpful when trying to distinguish between “service” and “recovery” material. Things relating to the traditions on a group level, for instance, could be thought of as service material, since they are addressed to the group and intended to help meetings or committees, but historically texts dealing with traditions have been treated as “recovery” literature and are developed through that process. In this case, it seems that there is a useful distinction to be made between writing that outlines basic principles and philosophy, such as the chapters in *It Works: How and Why*, and writing that details how to put those principles into practice, such as *PI and the NA Member*. We generally found that looking at service material from this perspective—philosophy versus practice—was more helpful than focusing on intended use and audience.

Moving Forward Together

We have had extensive discussions about this subject at almost every board meeting. We are trying to provide you with as much information as possible about where these discussions have brought us so that we can continue this discussion with you at the conference. We hope this memo helps to frame the issues for you and that our discussions at WSC 2008 are as productive as possible. We are sending this material to you ninety days before the conference in draft form, and have not attempted to publish these particular pieces as service pamphlets so that we can have this conversation about the future of these items and the larger issues. We believe it is our common goal to provide the fellowship with helpful and usable tools in their efforts to carry the message.

Contents of the Mailing

All three of the pamphlets following this cover letter illustrate the hazy boundary between service and recovery literature. Two of the three are new pieces we are working on. *Benefits of Service* is another piece addressing a service-related issue, but written for the individual member. *Leadership and Principles in NA* was initially drafted for the individual member, but has been revised with a service committee audience in mind. We are enclosing both drafts here so that you can see the evolution of the ideas as this piece changed from one targeted to a member to one targeted to a group or committee.

Changes to An Introduction to NA Meetings

The third pamphlet enclosed is *An Introduction to NA Meetings*, mentioned above. This was one of the first five service pamphlets we released, but we stopped distributing it after

hearing concern from members over the description of “clean” in the pamphlet. We are including it here for the purposes of discussion, with the definition of “clean” omitted, and additional language added. The additional language tells members on medication or drug replacement that they are welcome in NA and that our philosophy of complete abstinence can best be conveyed to them by reading NA literature and by talking to NA members.

The controversy that arose as a result of distributing *An Introduction to NA Meetings* illustrated the fact that we don’t have a written definition of “clean” agreed upon by the fellowship as a whole. It was never the point of this pamphlet to resolve the issue of what it means to be “clean” or to define that term for the membership; to do so would be an example of text that establishes NA principle or philosophy, which is the sort of text that we don’t believe should fall under WB Approved material. We believe that the piece as revised simply conveys already understood NA practice.

The list of terms in An Introduction to NA Meetings

As an aside, another question that has arisen about this piece has to do with its use of a glossary altogether. It seems some members are under the impression that including definitions of terms in the piece is contrary to the will of the conference because the 2006 conference voted down a motion to create a project plan, timeline, and budget for the creation of a recovery glossary. We do not see the brief list of terms explaining NA language to potential members in the enclosed service pamphlet as the same sort of endeavor as a project to create a recovery glossary. The list of terms in *An Introduction to NA Meetings* is comparable to the lists at the end of *A Guide to Local Services in NA* or the *CAR*; it’s meant to explain some of our terminology to those new to NA or NA service.

The Benefits of the Board-Approved Process

Our experience with *An Introduction to NA Meetings* demonstrated one of the best things about this new development track—its responsiveness. Because these service pamphlets are board-approved, they can be pulled or revised promptly as a result of fellowship input. The impetus for creating the service pamphlet track was to get material to the fellowship in a timely way, widely distributed, and to be able to adapt it as needed. These things all seem to be working well. WCNA-32 gave us an opportunity to distribute the service pamphlets in an unprecedented way; bulletins are not distributed nearly so widely. Nonetheless, it may be that the service pamphlet process could be improved. Perhaps we should have some sort of limited review or do a mailing to conference participants before general distribution to the fellowship. We would like to talk to participants at the conference about these questions of process as well.

Other Revisions Ahead

Another service pamphlet we would like to revise is *NA Groups and Medication*. We plan to have those revisions ready for your review and comment at WSC 2008. We plan to add material to this pamphlet from our existing bulletin on Methadone. Our goal is to end up with one piece that helps groups discuss and deal with this issue, rather than two pieces with overlapping and possibly even contradictory content.

Revisions to the Approval Process Policy

In the meantime, the Conference Approval Track material itself outlines new language we are proposing to describe the literature approval process. The motion that passed at the 2006 WSC prompted us to rewrite the policy, and we realized it made sense to do more than just tweak the policy but to devise a policy that works better and is easier to understand. We could have “piecemealed” a revision to policy and simply added a description of the new approval track created by the motion at WSC 2006, but it didn’t make sense to us to do that because even without a new development track to codify as policy, the distinctions outlined in the existing policy aren’t always clear. It made more sense to us to look at the policy as a whole and propose a revision that encompassed all of the literature and service material development tracks.

Honestly, we struggled in our discussions to try to come up with accurate and descriptive names for NA’s different types of literature, but again, we found ourselves getting “stuck” at times. What makes an “informational” pamphlet “informational”? Is *Am I an Addict* or *Self-Acceptance* the same category or type of literature as *H&I Service and the NA Member*, for example? Both are treated as “recovery literature” in terms of the approval process, but one could easily argue that the latter is “service or informational material.” There seemed to be no way to describe the different categories of texts other than using names to indicate the way they are approved: Fellowship approved, conference approved, and board approved. (The specific details of development and approval for each particular project would still be spelled out in the project plans.) Nonetheless, we have put together the policy that makes the most sense to us at this time, and we are open to the possibility that discussions at this conference may further refine and clarify that policy.

In Closing

Above and beyond the nuts and bolts of the policy, however, we look forward to discussing the broad issues that have been raised through the development of these service pamphlets. It is worth noting that the materials developed thus far have used the input from the Issue Discussion Topics as source material. The ability to revise or adapt these service pamphlets is much easier under this new process, and hopefully allows us to be more responsive to fellowship needs and concerns.

We believe that the following pieces would fall under board approval status because they do not seek to establish any new ideas or philosophy. Again, we are only distributing them to conference participants at this time to allow delegates time to reflect on the pieces before our discussions at WSC 2008. We will forward the revisions to *NA Groups and Medication* prior to the conference.

Please bring your thoughts to WSC 2008.

Service and the NA Member—the Benefits of Giving Back

The explanation of the NA symbol in the opening pages of our Basic Text points out that the foundation of our program is goodwill, and that goodwill is “best exemplified in service.” As a fellowship of addicts who had become all but incapable of demonstrating care or concern for others, the notion of demonstrating goodwill for others, and even ourselves, can be a terrifyingly foreign concept. As we begin to open up and trust other addicts enough to begin to let the Twelve Steps work in our lives, our attitude gradually shifts to make goodwill possible for us, once again. Often the first place we demonstrate that goodwill is in service to each other in Narcotics Anonymous.

Love in Action

We are sometimes tempted to draw lines between recovery and service, as if they are separate from each other. Service might seem like a chore to be dreaded, or a hobby best suited to certain types of NA members. When we experience relief from the fear, anger, and resentment that come with self-obsession, we are typically overjoyed at the chance to share that with others. After all, we keep what we have by giving it away. Service in NA is how we put our love and gratitude into action. Service isn’t a hobby for dull members or a chore we must suffer through. NA service is how we put our Twelfth Step to work with the Twelve Traditions. The Twelve Steps of NA give us the benefits of freedom from active addiction and an awakening of the spirit. Putting our gratitude into action by serving NA also offers many benefits, a few of which are listed here.

“A Part of”

When we had the awakening that Narcotics Anonymous offers another way to live, many of us wanted to feel connected to the rest of the NA Fellowship. As new members, the wreckage of our active addiction still weighed heavily on us. We needed ways to build our sense of self-worth. When other members asked us to show up early to the meeting to make coffee or set up chairs, we felt a sense of purpose. We no longer felt like guests—we were becoming part of the group. Maybe we didn’t have money yet to put in the basket, but we could stack chairs, wipe off tables, or clean coffee cups when the meeting ended. We began to feel like we were pulling our own weight and practicing self-support.

Keeping What We Have

No matter how hard we work our program of recovery, there are days when each of us feels lousy. Maybe our bills are overwhelming or we get in an argument with a partner or friend, or maybe we don’t feel well physically. We may have moments when we question whether recovery is making a difference. In our worse moments, we might begin to feel as if we’re no better than when we got here. If self-obsession begins to take hold, service can help us open the door to a world beyond our own wants and needs. Simple actions such as taking a call from the local helpline or sharing on a panel in a treatment center quickly remind us of how much our lives really have improved. Even when part of us seems to yearn for self destruction, helping someone else can help us feel worthwhile and find a sense of purpose.

We aren’t the only ones who benefit from our service. Those simple actions we make can have profound impact on still-suffering addicts. Most of us recall the turning point in

our lives when we finally began to believe that we, too, could stay clean and find a new way to live. We have a chance in Narcotics Anonymous to help other addicts have that same experience. Very little can compare to the joy of seeing hope pass over a newcomer's face as he or she dares for the first time to imagine that life without drugs is possible. Every NA member can relate to that experience on some level. Many members need no other reason to serve than to help other addicts experience the hope that NA offers.

In All Our Affairs

In addition to the strengthening our recovery and experiencing the joy of helping others, service helps us gain valuable skills and experience to use in our everyday lives. One of the many challenges we face in service is the task of learning how to work well with others. Addiction and self-centeredness have endowed us with a wide variety of antisocial behaviors and bizarre survival techniques. Practicing the principles of the steps and traditions as we serve with others helps us rely less on our character defects. The changes we face aren't always comfortable or painless, but when we stay clean, we emerge as better leaders and stronger people. The skills and approaches we learn in service help us in other areas of our lives. We practice these principles in our homes and our workplaces, with our friends and loved ones, and our lives improve as a result.

Those of us who grew up in unstable environments may find conflict extremely threatening or uncomfortable. Part of the recovery process is learning that we don't have to shrink from disagreement. We learn that we can agree to disagree, or disagree without being disagreeable. Even if we don't get along perfectly, serving together over time shows us that we're all on the same side. Our service meetings may get uncomfortable, heated, or adversarial, but we all want what's best for NA. The intense feelings about our disagreements pass, the principles of the program prevail, and we learn that we have other options besides fight or flight. There is something special about our deeply personal desire to help other addicts. Our ideas about how to do it might vary, but our primary purpose helps us find an unparalleled sense of unity with each other, regardless of our personal feelings toward each other. We use our principles to navigate conflict calmly. Disagreement and confrontation no longer need to be wrapped up in fear and anger, but even if they are, we can still get up at the end of the meeting, gather in a circle, and close in a spirit of unity.

Service adds a new layer of meaning to our relationships with others. The successes and setbacks we share help us develop deep bonds with members who might not otherwise be our friends. Empathy with one another grows as we share in the joys and pains of life on life's terms. When our service commitments end, our relationships with other trusted servants have often changed profoundly. Friendships become deeper, and we may even begin to find respect for members we don't like. This ability to connect with others and to peacefully coexist has great affects on all of our relationships, in and out of NA.

A Power Greater Than Ourselves

Service can also be a very important part of our relationship with a Higher Power. Some members find their first working understanding of a Higher Power through service. The

power we find working together is greater than anything we could accomplish alone. Our literature suggests that we can use the group as a power greater than ourselves. When we experience group business or service committee meetings, we see group conscience at work. Sometimes we think that our individual idea is best for the group, but the group or committee doesn't choose it, no matter how hard we argue. The results of the group conscience often turn out better than we could have imagined. Of course, that's not always the case. Sometimes we follow the group conscience and end up facing further difficulties. But when we maintain unity as a group, keep our primary purpose first, and focus on solutions instead of blame and fault, we tap into a loving force powerful enough to accomplish amazing tasks and overcome tremendous adversity. The group can be a simple, practical example of a loving power greater than ourselves.

Involvement with service committees is a great way to practice conscious contact with a power greater than ourselves, especially for those of us who do not pray. We add to the group conscience by sharing our ideas openly. When we actively listen to the conscience of the group, we soon find the knowledge of ways to serve and carry the NA message. In addition, actions speak louder than words, and taking steps to carry out the will of the group conscience is a great way to express our love and gratitude for Narcotics Anonymous. We may not see the results we expect or desire, but our efforts are never in vain. Even if we feel as though we haven't carried a message to anyone else, we have stayed clean for another day and strengthened our own recovery.

Our Common Welfare

One of the long-range benefits of our service is the contribution we make to NA as a whole. Recovery has given us, and the members around us, many amazing gifts. If we pause to imagine the future of NA, we easily see that the benefits of recovery have a snowball effect. In service, we work to be ready for addicts seeking relief from active addiction. But our service reaches beyond the addicts getting clean today. Our work helps the addicts who will find NA months, years, and even decades from now. The newcomers we sponsor today will carry the message to countless other addicts in years to come. The trusted servants we mentor today will guide others in service later. All that we do in service extends the reach of the Narcotics Anonymous message so that no addict need die, today or in years to come, without the opportunity to choose recovery.

A Way of Life

Our Twelfth Step calls us to carry our message to other addicts and to live our principles in every area of our lives. We carry our message directly by working with addicts one-on-one or in our groups, and we do it indirectly in service to NA. Our support for services that keep NA alive and growing ensures that addicts have a place to hear our message. As we live by our principles and share freely of ourselves, we become that message of hope.

Leadership and Principles in Narcotics Anonymous Service (To the Member)

The program of Narcotics Anonymous helps us cultivate our best qualities. As we stay clean and work the Twelve Steps, we gain freedom from the self-obsession at the core of addiction. We begin to care about still-suffering addicts, other NA members, and other human beings. Where once we were only self-serving, we develop a spirit of service to others. We demonstrate this by getting involved in our groups and service bodies. We put the needs of still-suffering addicts and NA as a whole before our own desires.

When we give our best to NA in service, we grow as a result, and our growth improves what we have to offer in service. Service gives all of us a chance to give back to NA, but our skills and talents vary dramatically from one member to the next. Our service efforts tend to be much more successful when we make the best use of our available resources. This begins with choosing strong leaders who can help others reach their full potential in service. In order to choose effective leaders, we need to understand effective leadership.

The Value of Leadership in NA

There are countless ways to serve in NA. Many groups have positions such as greeter, coffee maker, or clean-up person, all of which require little more than willingness. These are the types of tasks that can be done by anyone. The impact of these positions on our primary purpose varies. If no one makes coffee or tea, for example, it could arguably still be a decent meeting. But if no one cleans up after the meeting ends, we might run the risk of ruining our relationship with the meeting facility, which could affect our ability to be available to newcomers looking for help. Some cases are more subtle. For example, if we don't have a greeter, it might not seem to make a big difference. But to someone who comes to a meeting for the first time, a friendly one-on-one welcome to NA might make all the difference. Every one of us can step up and demonstrate a type of leadership by doing the simple tasks that keep NA alive and growing, whether it's our position or not.

Many service positions, however, require more than just willingness. Effective treasurers need good basic math skills, and secretaries must be able to take decent notes. These and many other positions require increasing levels of accountability and responsibility. We have positions of leadership in NA service that have a strong effect on our ability to make our message of hope more widely available. Leadership skills are helpful in most of our service positions, but in some positions, leadership is the primary function. These might include positions such as chairperson, facilitator, delegate, and many others. These trusted servants work to ensure that we make the most of our service efforts.

We value effective leaders in NA for what they help us accomplish. Skilled leaders are organized members with strong communication skills. Their leadership helps facilitate smooth service meetings. They encourage others to participate and share ideas, and they possess a strong working understanding of our steps, traditions, and concepts. It can be easy for us to get locked into rigid interpretations of our principles, but effective leaders must be willing to approach situations with an open mind. Our principles don't change, but there are as many right ways to apply them as there are wrong. We need leaders in NA who are flexible enough to consider new ideas and approaches, but firm when it comes to putting our principles first.

Sponsorship and Leadership

One model for leadership in Narcotics Anonymous has already been proving itself for years. Sponsorship has produced amazing results all through the history of NA. The power of one addict helping another, after all, is unparalleled. In our personal recovery, we look to experienced members for help in applying the NA program in our lives. Our sponsor offers us experience, strength, and hope to guide and support us in our recovery process. We are then also able to share with other addicts, including those we sponsor. We offer our knowledge and insights with the hope that it will help others.

The same idea applies in service. Strong leadership in NA service isn't just about sitting at the front of the room and making sure that people take turns talking. Effective leaders are the trusted servants who inspire other members, challenge them, and help them find useful and meaningful ways to participate in service. All of us encourage and support each other in service just as we do in any other area of recovery. Our strongest leaders tend to be the members who are particularly skilled at identifying talent and bringing out the best in the people they serve with. They are usually insightful and have a knack for calling our attention back to the principles when we get off track.

Some talents come naturally, but we acquire many more as we stay clean and continue to serve. Just as we learn a great deal from our sponsors, and then learn a great deal more when we sponsor others, mentorship is an opportunity for us to teach and learn at the same time. We work closely with other trusted servants to share ideas about the tasks we do in service. We lean on other trusted servants, past and present, for guidance and support. No matter what our position or level of service, and no matter how much experience we have, we must remain humble and ask questions. Open communication helps us avoid painful misunderstandings. Our humility reminds us that service is not about us; it's about carrying the message. When we serve selflessly and help others do the same, we foster an atmosphere of unity and cooperation in service, reminding us that we all have equal membership in NA, regardless of service position.

Stumbling Blocks to the Idea of Leadership

Our understanding of leadership in service is bound to grow and change over time. The line between strong leadership and government sometimes seem to blur. Those of us who came to NA with little regard for authority figures may be especially uncomfortable with the idea of leadership. Many of us experience urges to try to control situations with a heavy hand. The Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts can help us avoid the pitfalls of ego, power, and control. To maintain a proper attitude, serving rather than attempting to govern, we must put our principles of humility and anonymity first.

Most of us have experienced moments in NA service when a popular solution wasn't in line with our principles, or when a spiritual solution was very unpopular. The ultimate authority that guides our decisions is expressed through group conscience, so we need to remember that group opinion isn't the same as group conscience. Our Ninth Concept reminds us that we have a responsibility to consider all points of view. To be effective leaders, we must demonstrate the open-mindedness to hear out the "lone voice" or the willingness to be that voice, if necessary. For our group conscience to be effective, we must keep in mind our Seventh Concept, that all

voices are important. No matter what our position, we must speak our conscience. We do not coerce or manipulate the group; we simply offer our perspective and let the group decide. We accept the conscience of the group, even if we do not agree with it. Leadership by example sometimes involves working hard to carry out the conscience of the group even when we opposed it.

Humility

Many of us quickly reject forceful personalities, control, and domination. We might see little room for humility in high profile service positions and suspect the worst of members who act as leaders. Selfless service, however, sometimes means putting ourselves into positions in which our skills will be of best use to NA, even if that means subjecting ourselves to the criticisms of fellow members. We must remain constantly aware of our primary purpose and common welfare to set a strong example. We need to trust each other in service, even if we don't always agree.

Simply having a leadership position does not equal leadership. Strong leadership involves a great deal of humility. Humility means having a realistic view of ourselves, including our strengths as well as our weaknesses. We all have skills or abilities that can be especially useful in particular service positions. To practice humility, we must explore our strengths and weaknesses to discover how we can best serve NA. We should not downplay our talents to avoid certain positions, nor should we exaggerate them to gain the acceptance or influence that we think comes with some positions.

Anonymity

Sometimes we struggle to balance the Fourth Concept principle of considering leadership qualities with the principles of anonymity and equal membership in the Twelfth Tradition. Sometimes we confuse skills with personality. If we have strong organizational skills, we might be good in a secretary position. If we are good with facilitation, we might make a good chairperson. The real problem we face is that sometimes our personalities get in the way of our skills and talents. This is why humility is so important.

We may not feel humble when we explain our qualifications for a service position, even though we are simply being honest, not boastful or arrogant. By the same token, some of us feel uncomfortable judging candidates for a position, especially when an election feels more like a popularity contest. Our principle of anonymity means that we are all equal as NA members, so it can be awkward to choose one member over another.

To put principles before personalities, we match talent to task and leave our feelings out of it. That might mean making ourselves available for a position, even when we fear rejection. Or it could mean electing someone we don't like because we know they can do the job well. We practice anonymity by focusing solely on the job at hand and the qualifications of each candidate, and choosing the person who fits best to do the job.

Principles and Leadership in NA Service (For Service Committees or Groups)

Why Leadership?

Narcotics Anonymous has helped countless numbers of addicts throughout the world stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. As a result, NA has grown into a worldwide organization with many thousands of groups carrying our message of recovery. The primary purpose of our groups, our Fifth Tradition tells us, is to carry the NA message. We do service work to support our groups in those efforts and to extend the reach of our message. As our First Concept points out, our service structure is the means by which groups come together to coordinate and maintain those services. The more effective our service system is in supporting the groups, the better those groups will be able to carry our message to addicts who need it.

The Fourth Concept reminds us that we need to have effective leaders in our service system in order to best support our groups. Because we have seen so much success in our growth as a fellowship, it can appear to some members that there isn't much work that needs to be done. If there is a meeting (or meetings) every night, and the coffee is made, then it can seem that there isn't much more to do in support of our Twelfth Step and Fifth Tradition other than to share with newcomers. While it might be true that our fellowship can survive for some time relying solely on the power of identification that happens in our meetings, members who have been involved with service would quickly point out that there is a great deal of other work that we need to do to help addicts who need recovery find it in Narcotics Anonymous.

How Do We Attract and Encourage Leaders?

The work that can be accomplished through our service system is highly dependent on the members who step up and get involved. Some members might be drawn by what can appear to be a mix of politics, personalities, and the prestige of holding positions of seeming influence. Other members may be inspired to serve NA but turned off by their impressions of our service system. Sometimes negative comments about area or regional service can be enough to keep members away and instead, they may focus all their energy into serving their groups and working directly with newer members. Still, a rather impressive number of members, who are inspired by their own growth through the steps, get involved in NA service to ensure that others find the opportunity to recover in NA. These members come to NA service with a wide variety of skills and backgrounds. Some seem to be natural leaders, like many of those early members who helped NA become what it is today, and some who are skilled in other ways.

While there are countless leadership styles available in the world, the particular type of leadership that is most valuable to us in our NA service efforts is based on the spiritual principles found in our steps, traditions, and concepts. Our applications of these principles in our groups and service bodies can go a long way to help cultivate effective leadership, not just in those who seem to be natural leaders, but in all of our members who are willing to step forward and serve. All too often, members who would otherwise be willing to get involved in service are scared away by overwhelmingly extensive guidelines, policies, and procedures, or tiresome debates that take place during business meetings. Some service communities have found that simple solutions, such

as holding tradition- and concept-study meetings prior to business meetings, or conducting service learning days, have helped to raise knowledge and awareness among trusted servants of our guiding principles. While not all service commitments involve leadership roles, all of our members who are familiar with our principles can demonstrate a measure of leadership by standing up for those principles and educating other trusted servants about their importance. With trusted servants who are well-versed in our guiding principles, we might find that we no longer have such a need for extensive guidelines and debate to do our work.

What Leadership Qualities Are Necessary for NA Service?

Our steps, traditions, and concepts can provide all of our trusted servants with certain leadership qualities. In addition the willingness to get involved, to make a commitment and to work for the benefit of NA are essential for good leaders. Some of our service positions, however, require additional leadership skills that are not possessed by all NA members, just as a treasurer position may be best filled by a member with math skills. Some members seem to have natural talents for leadership, and other members may have more hidden potential, talents that need an opportunity to be developed through working within a group and learning how best to apply NA principles. Effective leaders accomplish a number of important goals in our service efforts, such as encouraging others to get involved and provide support, helping our service bodies to stay focused on the tasks at hand, and matching talent to task by helping members find service positions that make the best use of their available skills. Often some of our more experienced members find mentoring others to be a way of continuing to offer their skills for service to the fellowship while also assisting a newer member to develop their own leadership style.

There are many other ways that good leadership can help to ensure smooth, effective services. Just as important as the roles our leaders play in their service positions are the principles they practice in fulfilling those roles. Our groups or service bodies might accomplish a great deal if a few exceptional leaders were placed in charge to dictate their ideas to the other trusted servants. Thankfully, our Second Tradition prevents this from happening. No matter how skilled or talented any of our leaders might be, they do not govern. We rely on the power of group conscience to guide our decisions, and leaders who practice our principles encourage that process. The effectiveness of our service system hinges on effective, principle-based leadership.

Members who diligently work the Twelve Steps are bound to continually discover ways to replace character defects with spiritual solutions. In order for our service community to best embody the principles of our traditions and concepts, it is essential that we choose leaders who demonstrate those spiritual solutions in their daily lives and in their service to NA. A few principles that are especially important in our leaders, as indicated by our traditions and concepts, are accountability (Concepts Five and Eleven), integrity (Concepts Six, Eight, and Nine), humility (Second Tradition, Concepts Seven, Nine, and Twelve), and anonymity (Twelfth Tradition, Concepts Seven and Twelve). Members who apply these principles rigorously in their service to Narcotics Anonymous accomplish more than simply doing their jobs. These leaders act as stewards of their positions and of their service bodies, leaving both in better shape when they have completed their terms of service.

Selecting and Supporting Trusted Servants

The task of selecting leaders in our service bodies can be difficult at times. It can seem rather unkind to subject a member to intense scrutiny simply because that member has demonstrated a willingness to serve. In keeping with our Twelfth Tradition, our Fourth Concept calls us to consider leadership qualities carefully even if it might feel uncomfortable to do so. We need to keep in mind that we are not judging the value of members as recovering addicts or as people; we are evaluating their potential to be effective in a given trusted servant position. When we choose trusted servants, we share in the responsibility for the job those trusted servants perform. As a service body, we must honestly assess whether or not willing members possess the skills and abilities necessary to carry out the duties involved in the service position or whether the needed skills can be learned “on the job.” We ask ourselves whether the members have the demonstrated ability to apply the spiritual principles of our steps, traditions, and concepts in their service efforts. When we demonstrate the courage necessary to select capable leaders and to help those leaders be successful in their roles, the results will show in the continued growth of NA.

An Introduction to Narcotics Anonymous Meetings

If you're planning to go to a Narcotics Anonymous meeting for the first time, it might be nice to know what to expect. The information here is meant to give you an understanding of what happens in our meetings. The words we use and the way we act might be unfamiliar to you at first, but hopefully this information can help you get the most out of your first NA meeting. If you show up early, leave late, and ask lots of questions before and after the meeting, you'll probably get the most out of every meeting you attend.

People have all sorts of reasons for attending NA meetings, but the reason for each meeting is to give NA members a place to share recovery with other addicts. If you are not an addict, look for an open meeting, which welcomes non-addicts. If you're an addict or think you might have a drug problem, we suggest a meeting every day for at least ninety days to get to know NA members and our program. Members in many places hug frequently. In other places, members shake hands instead. Feel free to decline hugs.

NA literature is also a great source of information about our program. Our Basic Text (*Narcotics Anonymous*) or our recovery pamphlets are a good place to start. Most meetings offer pamphlets for free, while books are generally sold at the group's cost. Most of our literature is also available to read or buy at www.na.org.

The following is some general information that applies to most NA meetings:

- ✓ We are not concerned with types or amounts of drugs; we focus on the ways addiction and recovery affect our lives.
- ✓ NA meetings are not classes or group therapy sessions. We do not teach lessons or provide counseling. We simply share our personal experiences and ideas about addiction and recovery with one another.
- ✓ Meetings are often held in churches, treatment centers, or other facilities because these places tend to be affordable, available, or convenient. NA is not a part of or connected to any other group, organization, or institution.
- ✓ To respect the anonymity of all of our members, we ask that people who attend our meetings not talk about who our members are or what they share in meetings.
- ✓ NA has no membership fees or dues. Our members make voluntary contributions at meetings to support the group and other efforts to carry our message. Nonmembers are asked not to contribute so NA can remain fully self-supporting.
- ✓ Some of us find NA when we are taking prescription medication, still detoxing from drugs or on drug replacement therapy. Regardless of what you may be

Some helpful NA terms:

addict—person with the disease of addiction

Basic Text—the book that contains our core ideas, entitled *Narcotics Anonymous*

closed meeting—meeting for addicts or people who might have a drug problem

group—members who hold one or more regularly scheduled NA meetings

Higher Power—any loving force that helps a member stay clean and seek recovery

newcomers—new NA members

open meeting—meeting that welcomes interested nonmembers to attend

relapse—when a lapse in recovery results in a brief or extended return to drug use

sharing—offering personal ideas and experience with addiction and recovery

sponsor—experienced member who gives guidance and support to other members

trusted servants—members who have service positions in NA

taking when you first come to NA, you are welcome. We encourage you to read NA literature (*Basic Text, In Time of Illness, NA Groups and Medication, etc*), which will explain NA's approach to addiction based on complete abstinence, and to talk to NA members about what worked for them.

Here are a few things that you might expect to see or experience in our meetings:

- ✓ Meetings are usually either discussion or speaker meetings. Discussion meetings allow members to take turns sharing. Speaker meetings allow one or more members to share for an extended period of time.
- ✓ Visitors and newcomers are usually asked to introduce themselves by their first name. Newcomers are usually welcomed with a handshake or hug and a welcome keytag.
- ✓ In most places, it is customary for members to gather in a circle to end the meeting with a short prayer or NA reading.
- ✓ Groups often mark or sign attendance sheets or court cards as a courtesy to people who request it, but some groups and members choose not to do so. If needed, it is best to ask how the group handles this before the meeting begins.
- ✓ Most groups provide schedules or directories of other local NA meetings.

About sharing:

- ✓ NA relies on the “therapeutic value of one addict helping another.” Nonmembers are generally asked not to share in meetings.
- ✓ Members are usually asked to share only once per meeting, mindful of the meeting's time limitations. Many meetings ask members to limit sharing to five minutes or less.
- ✓ Members are also encouraged to share their own experiences instead of responding to other members. Individuals can have conversations before or after meetings.
- ✓ Members are asked to avoid sharing explicit details and descriptions of drugs and using in meetings, and to focus instead on how addiction and recovery affect us.
- ✓ Newcomers are generally encouraged to focus on listening, but they are welcome to share during the participation portion of the meeting if they feel the need to.
- ✓ Newcomers are also encouraged to listen closely for experienced members they relate to. These members might make good sponsors or offer other guidance and support.

We strive to make everyone feel welcome in NA. Here are some ways we do that:

- ✓ Some meetings have a short break for members to talk, get refreshments, use the restroom, or smoke. At meetings with no break, we wait until after the meeting.
- ✓ We don't allow drugs or drug paraphernalia in any NA meetings.
- ✓ We strongly discourage any harassment, threats, or disturbing behavior before, during, and after our meetings. This includes unwelcome sexual, romantic, financial, and religious solicitation. Our meetings are for sharing NA recovery. If you feel harassed or threatened, talk to the group secretary or another trusted servant.
- ✓ We ask latecomers to find a seat quietly and avoid distracting people.
- ✓ We discourage side conversations. Even at a very low whisper, they distract others.
- ✓ Phone calls and text messages also distract others. We ask members to turn off or silence their cell phones and other electronic devices during meetings.
- ✓ In many places, hugs are a common NA greeting. If you're not comfortable hugging, don't hesitate to say so. Most members will be understanding about this.

Our meetings vary widely in size and style. Some are small and intimate; others are large and loud. The practices and terms used in our meetings also vary widely from one place to another. Most importantly, our meetings are where we share our experience, strength, and hope. If you're an addict, keep coming to our meetings and share in our recovery!