

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS CORRECTIONAL MEETING FORMATS

There are many different types of facilities with different rules and regulations. We offer some general guidelines for choosing a format for the meeting/presentation, and a general outline around which to develop your own format. One thing which is common to all Hospital and Institutions (H&I) meetings is that they are closed, unless by invitation of the panel leader or the H&I subcommittee. When choosing a format, the first thing to consider is the Fifth Tradition, "Each group has but one primary purpose, to carry the message to the addict who still suffers." The format should provide a structure which ensures that the NA message of recovery is carried. For this reason, open sharing types of meetings are not used in the H&I setting. They tend to lend themselves to an atmosphere which is inappropriate for an H&I meeting/presentation. The best formats are those in which outside members are delivering a message of recovery in NA. The best examples are: speaker meetings, panel presentations, question-and-answer, literature and topic discussions. Meetings/presentations should start and end at the pre-arranged time.

The following is a general format for an NA H&I meeting/presentation. It may be modified according to local needs or customs. It is presented here for those seeking some direction. Remember, it is our responsibility to maintain an atmosphere of recovery.

- a. Introduce yourself and welcome everyone to the meeting.
- b. Have a moment of silence followed by the serenity prayer.
- c. Invite all attending the meeting to give their first name (when appropriate).
- d. Briefly explain that this is a hospitals and institutions (H&I) meeting. Because these residents' access to regular NA meetings is limited, the area service H&I subcommittee is bringing this special meeting/presentation here.
- e. At this time have residents volunteer to read from conference-approved literature. Usually, "Who Is an Addict?," "What Is the NA Program?," "How It Works," "Why Are We Here?," or other selections are used. Within long-term facilities the reading "What Can I Do?" and the Twelve Traditions can be used.
- f. Depending on the format selected, proceed as follows: "After the speakers have finished there will be time for any questions. There will be no cross-discussion while anyone is sharing. Please hold your questions until the end of the meeting."

Specific Formats

There are many different meeting/presentation formats that may be used; however, whichever format is chosen it is important that the H&I panel maintain control in the meeting. Many times the use of extremely liberal meeting formats will cause the meeting to be unruly and difficult to control.

Speaker Presentation

In a speaker meeting, one or more NA members share their experience, strength, and hope. This tends to lay out some basic symptoms and characteristics of the disease, and to show how NA has brought about recovery. A narrative

of events accomplishes little, but a sharing of feelings, self-image, turning points, new awareness, etc., carries a message of recovery.

(Note: This follows a-f)

g. Introduce the speaker(s).

h. Leave sufficient time for questions and discussion at end of presentation.

i. Make any announcements that are pertinent (i.e., meeting directories or literature being available, speakers are available to talk after the presentation, etc.).

j. Close with the prayer of your choice.

Panel Presentation

This is similar to a speaker presentation. Rather than all sharing on the same topic, panel members usually take one aspect of recovery in NA each and share on that subject. In this way, topics can be selected in advance that give information and experience on a variety of relevant subjects.

(Note: This follows a-f)

g. Explain how the format works (each member of the panel shares on one topic or on separate topics and then there will be time for questions and discussion).

h. Introduce the panel members one at a time to make their presentation (you should discuss the length in advance so that the timing works out).

i. Leave sufficient time for questions and discussion at end of presentation.

j. Make any announcements that are pertinent (i.e., meeting directories or literature being available, panel members are available to talk after the meeting, etc.).

k. Close with the prayer of your choice.

Topic Discussion

This type of meeting allows for the participation of the residents. This format differs from open participation in that more structure is provided for the discussion. One or two members from the outside should share first to set the tone and direction of the meeting. It is a good idea to keep another experienced member in reserve to call on if the discussion gets away from recovery from addiction. The leader, or chairperson, should call on speakers one at a time rather than letting the discussion go spontaneously. This will allow for more control in keeping the meeting recovery-oriented.

(Note: This follows a-f)

g. Introduce the topic and share first to set a recovery-oriented tone.

h. Call on several residents and then a panel member repeating this process until it is time to end the meeting.

i. Make any announcements that are pertinent (i.e., meeting directories or literature being available, panel members are available to talk after the meeting, etc.).

j. Close with the prayer of your choice.

Topics should be chosen carefully, with the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in mind. There are a multitude of topics that relate to our personal recovery in NA. There are many topics that have nothing to do with recovery. It is important to remember in most H&I meetings we are dealing with addicts who are relatively

inexperienced with recovery. When we select the topic for an H&I meeting, their needs should be considered first. The following list is not complete, but you will find a number of topics that are appropriate for most H&I meetings/presentations. You are not restricted to this list by any means. It is only presented as a resource so that you may get some ideas.

Some Suggested Topics

1. Any IP or selection from the Basic Text
2. H.O.W. (honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness)
3. Surrender
4. Acceptance
5. The Basics (Don't use, meetings, phone numbers, literature, sponsor, and the steps)
6. H.A.L.T.S. (don't get too: hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or serious)
7. Responsible for our own recovery
8. Freedom from active addiction
9. Identify rather than compare
10. Spiritual, not religious, program
11. Going to any lengths
12. Transition from correctional facilities to the fellowship
13. Tools of the fellowship
14. Letting go
15. Feelings
16. Learning to trust
17. Giving up old playmates, playgrounds, and playthings
18. Living just for today
19. The first three steps
20. Denial
21. Reservations
22. Sponsorship

Literature Discussion

For a literature discussion meeting, parts of the Basic Text or other conference-approved literature are read and discussed. Passing the literature around and allowing everyone a chance to read can be an easy way to get the residents involved. If you do that, though, be sure to include in the format a statement like, "Feel free to pass the literature along if you'd rather not read." Not everyone is willing or able to read out loud.

(Note: This follows a-f)

- g. Explain how the format works (will read through the selected literature, stopping periodically to share, or read through entire piece before sharing).
- h. Introduce the panel members.
- i. Begin the reading of the selected piece of conference-approved literature. Residents can be involved with the sharing, but if it gets out of hand be sure to have a panel member prepared to shift the tone back to recovery.
- j. Make any announcements that are pertinent (i.e., meeting directories)

or literature being available, panel members are available to talk after the meeting, etc.).

k. Close with the prayer of your choice.

Questions and Answers

The question and answer format allows residents to write or state questions and topics they might feel frightened or embarrassed about. This format seems to be especially well received at adolescent facilities. The panel leader asks the residents to write topics or questions that are of concern to them and place them in a basket. After introducing the format, the questions are pulled one at a time and one or two of the panel members respond. If the question has already been adequately addressed the next question would be drawn and so on. The panel leader must judge whether a topic or question is appropriate to the meeting/presentation before it is read out loud. If not, just move on to the next question.

(Note: This follows a-f)

g. Explain how the format works (residents write topics or questions they would like discussed and place them in a basket, or residents simply ask questions they would like to have discussed.)

h. Introduce the panel members.

i. The topics are drawn out of the basket and fielded by the panel one at a time. Inappropriate topics shouldn't be read out loud.

j. Make any announcements that are pertinent (i.e., meeting directories or literature being available, panel members are available to talk after the meeting, etc.).

k. Close with the prayer of your choice.

Step Study

A step study meeting may be held in an H&I setting. The Basic Text, *Narcotics Anonymous*, or other conference-approved literature is used to read the step and then the material is discussed. It is important to have members on the panel who have practiced the particular step being studied. This type of meeting/presentation usually works well in longer-term facilities where the residents have had some previous exposure to the Narcotics Anonymous program of recovery. This format allows the residents of the facility to have more participation.

(Note: This follows a-f)

g. Explain how the format works (will read through the selected step stopping periodically to share; or read through entire piece of literature before sharing).

h. Introduce the panel members.

i. Begin the reading of the selected step from conference-approved literature. Residents can be involved with the sharing, but if it gets out of hand be sure to have a panel member prepared to shift the tone back to recovery.

j. Make any announcements that are pertinent (i.e., meeting directories or literature being available, panel members are available to talk after the meeting, etc.).

k. Close with the prayer of your choice.