

# SAMPLE PANEL MEMBER ORIENTATION PACKAGE

*Central Vancouver Island Area*

## H&I SUBCOMMITTEE

### Orientation

H&I orientation is a period that allows NA members to become familiar with H&I work so they aren't rushed into it without any preparation for this service. Many people are quite apprehensive about getting into H&I for a variety of reasons. Don't be put off, everyone has something to offer. This packet has been compiled by the *Central Vancouver Island Area H&I Subcommittee* to give a brief outline of some of the specifics that will be important for you as a panel member. The *H&I Handbook* gives a much more in-depth look at H&I work in Narcotics Anonymous if you decide you want to learn more about this rewarding type of service. Many areas as a part of orientation bring those that are new to H&I, to their first H&I meeting/presentation or two as an observer. This will give you a chance to just listen at first and see how an H&I meeting/presentation really works. Also this helps many feel more comfortable when they come join the panel.

### The Meeting/Presentation Format

There are a variety of formats that we use when carrying the message into facilities, but there are some key points to keep in mind about all of them. The format of any particular H&I meeting/presentation may vary from meeting to meeting depending on the type of facility. In short-term facilities, the format will be more focused on the panel members carrying a message in to the residents, while at a long-term facility we may encourage more participation from the residents. In H&I we are carrying the message into the facility. At an H&I meeting we are not there to dump our problems, but rather to help these addicts become aware of what NA is and how it works in our lives. In effect, an H&I meeting is an introduction to our fellowship for addicts. The panel leader should let you know what the format is before the meeting/ presentation and should be able to answer any questions you may have about it. If you would like to see samples of a variety of formats, there is an explanation of several of them in the *H&I Handbook*. Whatever format is chosen, we normally get the residents involved with a question and answer session at some point in the meeting/presentation. Also, you may be asked to stay after the meeting for a while to talk with the residents if that is allowed.

### Personal Commitments

Please **DO NOT** volunteer for an H&I meeting/presentation if:

1. You are not sure that you want to attend, or
2. You are not sure you will be able to attend the meeting. If something comes up and you will be unable to make it, try to give the panel leader at least forty-eight hours notice so that he/she can invite someone to fill your spot. **DO NOT** ask someone to take your place or even to come along with you to the meeting. The panel leader is the only one that is allowed to invite people to the meeting.

### Questions and Answers

This a good idea to encourage questions concerning what was presented at the meeting or other general questions about NA, but there are a few things you

should keep in mind. Please remember that NA has no opinion on outside issues. Occasionally during the question and answer period or when talking after the meeting/presentation, the residents will ask us to give an opinion on outside issues such as:

1. Other recovery programs or fellowships.
2. The facility, i.e., "Do I need to stay in treatment?"
3. Many other issues that do not pertain to recovery from addiction in the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship. It is very important that we are not drawn into these types of discussions! Always remember to only your share experience, strength, and hope about YOUR recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

### **Working with Others: Men with Men, Women with Women**

Some facilities house only men or only women. Other facilities house both men and women, but keep them separate. In these facilities, where your meetings/presentations will consist of only men or only women, we feel strongly that only same-sex Narcotics Anonymous members should participate. Remember, our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery, not to make our meetings more popular with the addicts we are trying to help. Problems that arise in this area have the potential to seriously damage the credibility of Narcotics Anonymous. Experience has taught us that we can avoid these problems if we follow this simple guideline.

### **Adolescents**

When adolescents are referred to in this handbook, we are referring to anyone under the legal age of majority in your state or country. We need to remember that adolescents are prospective members and should be treated with respect. When sharing in an H&I meeting/presentation, we need to remember that to an adolescent, the stress experienced due to peer pressure or the relationship with their parents and/or teacher may be just as much a crisis to them as losing a job, marriage, or house may be to others. In NA, we learn to deal with our feelings and emotions, and share with others how we have been able to work through them by utilizing the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. Due to the governmental statutes regarding adolescents, we need to be especially aware of facilities' rules and regulations as they relate to our interaction with these prospective members. For example, some facilities may require a staff member to be present during meetings/presentations. One suggestion we may make to administrators of facilities for adolescents is that they make attendance at the H&I meeting voluntary. We have found this reduces distraction, increasing the opportunity for recovery in the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship. While some people maintain that adolescents respond better to people closer to their own age, the bulk of our experience suggests that the age of the person sharing at an adolescent H&I meeting is secondary to their ability to share a strong, clear message of recovery. Adolescents seem to respond more to the message than to the messenger. All H&I meetings are highly structured and should be geared towards recovery through the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. Our experience has shown that we do not need to use a special format when carrying the message to adolescents. In addition to the do's and don'ts found at the end of this package, we feel that the following should be included.

### **Do's**

**Do** Remember that this is a "we" program. No addict should feel that he/ she is being preached to.

**Do** Remember that an addict is an addict, regardless of age.

**Do** Tell them that there is fun in recovery, i.e., social events, fellowship, etc.

**Do** Acknowledge and validate their feelings and emotions.

## Don'ts

**Don't** Glorify your past.

**Don't** Say, "I feel like I'm talking to my kids."

**Don't** Compare your bottom to theirs.

**Don't** Patronize adolescents.

**Don't** Use profanity.

## H&I Requirements

You have been invited to carry the message of recovery through H&I meetings/presentations because:

1. You have at least six months abstinence from all drugs.
2. You have a strong NA message of recovery from addiction.
3. You seem willing to comply with all of the H&I subcommittee's and the facility's requirements.
4. You are willing to carry the message in a responsible way.

## Do's and Don'ts for H&I Participation

### Do's

**Do** Make directories of outside meetings available to residents.

**Do** Clarify the facility's rules with anyone you bring in.

**Do** Start and end on time!

**Do** Briefly explain what H&I is.

**Do** Make it clear that NA is separate and distinct from the facility as well as other fellowships.

**Do** Try to get residents involved, especially those in long-term facilities (i.e., literature person, coffee maker, readings, etc.)

**Do** Obey all dress codes. Exercise common sense and dress appropriately.

**Do** Keep staff aware of your whereabouts at all times.

**Do** Stamp all literature you bring into a facility with the local helpline number.

**Do** Screen all panel-members carefully, especially regarding the clean time or other requirements.

### Don'ts

**Don't** Break another person's anonymity, or tell his or her story.

**Don't** Debate any issues involving facility rules or regulations.

**Don't** Get involved in discussions on outside issues; remember why we are there.

**Don't** While sharing, put too much focus on what it was like. They already know.

**Don't** Debate which drugs are acceptable. NA is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs.

**Don't** Discuss conditions within the facility, or opinions about staff members.

**Don't** Carry excessive cash, or wear expensive or flashy jewelry.

**Don't** Show favoritism to any resident(s).

**Don't** Take messages in or out of the facility.

**Don't** Give out any other person's address or phone number.

**Don't** Carry in any contraband items, such as cigarettes (if applicable) or weapons.

Remember at all times that you have a responsibility to the facility, to the residents, and to NA. If you observe the above suggestions, and follow the Twelve Traditions, you will uphold your responsibilities to all three.

