



NNMA Phoneline Volunteer Training Information

History	
Date	Description of any changes
Feb 7, 2017	Approved

A. Phoneline Volunteers

A phoneline volunteer is an NA member whose primary objective is to direct the potential newcomer to an NA meeting or direct questions about our fellowship to the appropriate website.

The first NA member the caller will come in contact with is usually the phoneline volunteer. The response and attitude of a volunteer can have a lasting impression on the caller. This is a service position of great responsibility.

Experience has shown that the most successful phoneline volunteers possess certain assets which are beneficial in the accomplishment of their responsibilities. For NNMA these qualifications are:

1. A minimum of one year clean-time
2. Appropriate training (e.g., group orientation session, personal orientation, etc.)
3. A knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous. (e.g., the only requirement..., our primary purpose..., never endorse related facilities..., non-professional..., no opinion on outside issues..., attraction rather than promotion..., anonymity..., etc.)
4. The willingness to serve
5. The willingness to give personal time

Phoneline volunteers may receive calls from NA members, potential newcomers, family and friends of addicts, and other people interest in NA (professionals, students and members of the media). Keeping a log of telephone calls received is a method by which we may evaluate and improve the services that we provide. Prepare the Phoneline Log that can be used to account for all calls received during each shift (refer to Addendum A). This information should then be forwarded to the public information and/or phoneline subcommittee on a regular basis.

Upon receiving a call, the first thing to determine is whether the caller is an addict seeking help. Calls from potential newcomers are, of course, the most important calls received by a phoneline volunteer. The volunteer provides a brief introduction of the NA program and explains, in general, what the caller can expect at a meeting. See the Phoneline Flowchart on page 11.

NNMA Phonenumber Volunteer Training Information

Guidelines for Taking Calls

The following are basic guidelines for taking calls, every call will be different. If you are not sure how to handle a call or an issue that comes up please contact the Phonenumber Chair for further guidance.

- The number one objective is to get the caller to a meeting.
- We want to give the caller the message of recovery: any addict can stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a new way of life.
- Be warm and friendly.
- Remain objective and non-argumentative.
- Don't preach or use judgmental words.
- Don't try to persuade someone to stop using.
- Don't project your own issues into the call.
- Don't glorify active addiction.
- Don't make promises or guarantees to callers about what Narcotics Anonymous will do for them.
- Take the time to check current schedule so that you can relay accurate information.
- The Phonenumber is the first introduction to Narcotics Anonymous for many addicts. Connect with your higher power before returning a call. (example: Take a moment to say the Serenity Prayer)

Special Considerations

Sometimes a caller will use the Narcotics Anonymous Phonenumber as a counseling service. Remember that we are primarily an information line. Volunteers are not counselors or psychologists and cannot help solve life issues or counsel callers. The following are some guidelines to handle such calls:

If the caller tends to talk for a long time and the conversation is not getting anywhere:

- Give the caller information
- Politely end the call
- Suggested ways to end the call:
 "I need to end this call in case another addict is trying to get through for help."

NNMA Phonline Volunteer Training Information

Do's and Don'ts

Phonline Volunteers Do's

- Do always identify yourself with your first name only and state that you are an addict.
- Do always have the necessary materials (e.g., White Booklet, meeting list, NA pamphlets, Twelfth-Step list, and Phonline Log) close to the telephone, in order to avoid delay and confusion.
- Do find out what the caller needs. Ask questions.
- Do, if you are returning a call, be certain that the person requesting help is on the line before identifying yourself as an addict or mentioning Narcotics Anonymous.
- Do remember to be helpful and polite to all callers.
- Do make appropriate referrals when necessary.
- Do keep a log of all the calls you answer.
- Do contact the phonline chairperson if problems arise.

Don'ts

- Don't argue with people whose views of addiction differ from yours or NA's. If the caller does not want to stop using, do not try to persuade him/her to stop.
- Don't try to handle calls that you are not qualified to answer.
- Don't give medical advice.
- Don't give out other people's names or telephone numbers.
- Don't 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's make-up (variance in size of meeting, NA open to all age groups, etc.).
- Don't glorify active addiction by telling war stories.
- Don't project your own issues
- Don't preach, swear, or use judgmental words

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Call Logging

Each Phonline member is asked to provide feedback on difficult or unusual calls. These calls will be discussed at the Phonline Subcommittee meetings. This will help the committee to know what changes may need to be made to better serve callers. Completing a call log is helpful in capturing some of the details. A call log is simply some notes pertaining to a call. The following information should be included:

- The date and time
- Who was the caller (addict, family member, or professional)
- How the call was resolved – refer to a meeting, etc.
- How did they hear about NA (used for PR)
- Anything special? Information needed to complete the call. (ex. Did they contact the Phonline Chair for information on how to handle the call?)

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is to protect the caller, the phonline volunteer, and other Narcotics Anonymous members. As a phonline volunteer we ask that you follow the following guidelines:

- In the case of ever returning a call, be certain the person who answer is the one who called before mentioning Narcotics Anonymous or identifying yourself as an addict.
- When leaving a message protect the caller's anonymity.
 - Don't give the Narcotics Anonymous number in the voicemail
 - Just give your first Narcotics Anonymous name and that you are returning a call and they are welcome to call again.
- When a caller asks for a certain member, never confirm or deny that person is a member of Narcotics Anonymous.
- Never give out another member's name or number to anyone even if the caller is law enforcement.
- If the caller asks for a NNMA officer or any other trusted servant, take the caller's Narcotics Anonymous name and number and have that trusted servant call them back.
- If you get a request for a speaker or research information take the caller's number and have Public Relations Chair or another appropriate subcommittee call them back.

NNMA Phonline Volunteer Training Information

SAFETY

Phonline volunteers need to be sure to put their safety and recovery first. Phonline is an informational line; we are not a taxi service or a counseling service. Phonline volunteers are not required to meet or give rides; it is at their own discrimination. The following guidelines are to protect the phonline volunteer.

When returning calls:

- Give only your first name
- Use your best judgement
- If you don't want your number transmitted
 - Dial *67 before the number to block your number
 - If you find the caller automatically rejects blocked calls, you may try to call another volunteer.

Family and Friends

Addiction is a disease that affects the whole family or environment where a using addict lives. Therefore, many calls come from family or friends of addicts. Narcotics Anonymous does not deal with these problems. Even though we are here primarily to help the addict, it is important to give these callers some time and support. By listing ourselves on the internet and in the telephone book, we invite calls from the public. We ought to treat callers kindly and talk to anyone who reaches out for help.

- Briefly inform them about Narcotics Anonymous
- If the addict is ready for help:
 - Direct them to a Narcotics Anonymous meeting
 - Suggest that the addict call the phonline
 - If the addict is with the caller, ask if they are willing to talk
 - If you are willing, offer to meet them at an open meeting with the addict
- Suggest the caller contact Nar-Anon (be sure to let the caller know Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with Nar-Anon)
- -Keep in mind that the caller could be the addict

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Crisis and Medical Calls

The phonenumber service is an informational service only and is not qualified to handle emergency situations. Never give medical advice, suggesting to stop using can be considered medical advice. Follow these guidelines if you receive such a call:

- If the caller is asking about the effects of certain drugs
 - Refer the caller to 911
- If the caller has overdosed
 - Remain Calm
 - Try to get the caller to hang up and call 911
 - If they can't or won't call 911, see if you can get their address so you can hang up and call 911 for them. If you feel it is appropriate, you can call them back and keep them on the phone until the EMTs arrive.
 - Do not, under any circumstances, give medical advice or try to help yourself.
- If the caller is suicidal
 - Always take a suicide call seriously. Never assume it's a joke. It's impossible to tell over the phone, especially if the caller has been using. Have them call the Crisis Hotline (855) NMCRIISIS or text 741741

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Common Phonline Calls

The following section illustrates several types of calls commonly received by phonline volunteers. These outlines are not meant to be a script for phonline calls. Instead, they are offered as examples of appropriate responses in various situations.

On the following pages, possible responses appear in italics. Remember that we carry the message of recovery to the caller when we express that:

1. Our primary objective is to the addict to a meeting
2. The program works
3. We were once suffering ourselves
4. We care and are willing to help

Our tone of voice and delivery speed are 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.

A. Fellowship Matter/Request for Information

Give a brief description of NA to callers requesting presentations, special meetings, literature, activities, etc. Refer them to the Regional or World website. The volunteer also explains that these requests will be referred to the NA member designated to handle such calls. *Never* make these types of commitments on your own. The phonline volunteer takes the name, number, etc. of the caller, completes the Referral Form and passes it along accordingly (refer to Addendum C).

In the event that a member of the media contacts the phonline, we must be ready to respond appropriately. It is important to request help from the public information service members in your area, region, or at the world level (refer to *A Guide To Public Information* for the PI contingency plan).

B. Personal Calls

If the caller wants to meet with or talk to a specific individual in NA, politely tell them, *“It is our policy that we cannot accept personal messages, and I cannot give out the telephone number of anyone who may or may not be in the fellowship.”* Keep in mind that the anonymity of our members is very important and we must *never* acknowledge anyone’s membership in our fellowship, either directly or indirectly.

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C. Talking to a Friend or Family Member

Crisis Calls-Although most of the calls taken by the phonline volunteer are routine in nature, occasionally a crisis call may arise. Always take these calls seriously. When the volunteer has established that a caller is in a crisis, the volunteer can quickly refer the caller to the appropriate telephone number from the Community Service Referral List (refer to Addendum B). Make sure the person writes the number down, then say, *"When the crisis passes, give our telephone number to your loved one and suggest he/she call NA to hear about recovery from drug addiction."*

Does The Addict Want Help?

Find out if the addict wants to stop using. If the answer is yes and he/she would like to hear about recovery from drug addiction, talk to them (see the "Talking to an Addict" section below). If the addict doesn't want to stop using or come to the telephone, tell the caller, "We cannot do anything for your loved one until they want to stop using - the addict must want help. There are however, programs for loved ones of addicts. I can tell you how to contact one if you would like." NOTE: Always explain briefly the principle of our Sixth Tradition. "Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with, nor recommends any other organization, institution, emergency service, agency, or program. We simply provide alternate telephone numbers to callers who need services other than NA." Answer questions about NA politely, but don't tie up the telephone for long, "We need to clear the line now in case an addict is trying to call us. Feel free to attend an open meeting if you would like to find out more about NA. Your loved one may wish to attend with you."

NOTE: For additional information, refer to the "How to Handle Special Calls" section on page 10.

D. Talking to an Addict

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

Addict Wants Information About NA

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 of his/her questions, and if you sense that 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.

Addict Interested May Be Ready For Help: NO

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

Addict Interested May Be Ready For Help: YES

If the caller wants help that is beyond the scope of services that NA can provide (e.g., detox, treatment information, etc.), see the "How to Handle Special Calls" section on page 10. Do not hang

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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.

Addict Wants To Stop Using Or Is Not Sure

Respond empathetically. Share a little about what it was like, what happened, and what it is like today. 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

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.). It is helpful to go into some 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. I will/won't be at that meeting. I'm looking forward to meeting you."

Addict Won't Go To A Meeting

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.

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."

If the caller presents **obstacles**, "My car doesn't work, etc." respond, "Does this problem have a solution?" or "I might be able to find you a ride to a meeting."

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."

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." Try to arrange for a Twelfth-Step volunteer to meet them at the meeting.

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 ask that you not have any drugs or paraphernalia with you during the meeting."

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. I don't have to use 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."

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E. How to Handle Special Calls

A Narcotics Anonymous phonline is strictly for dispensing information about the NA Fellowship, NA meetings, and recovery. The volunteer must always 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, in the volunteer's opinion, are beyond the boundaries of Narcotics Anonymous should be told we do not make referrals. We cannot recommend a treatment center, detox, etc. Explain that Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with, nor recommends, any other organizations, institutions, emergency services, agencies, or programs.

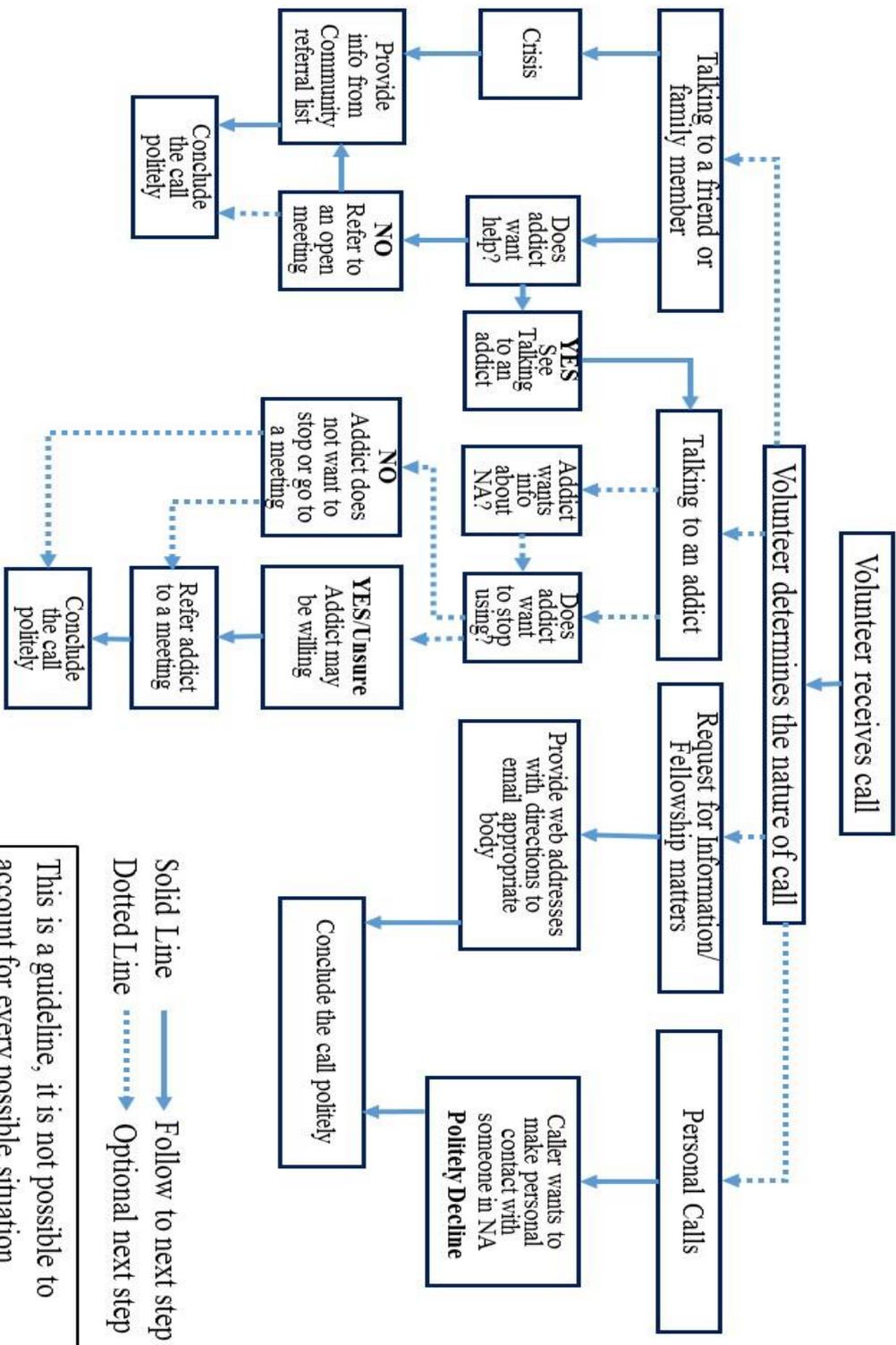
Handling Crisis Calls

Although most of the calls taken by the phonline volunteer are routine in nature, occasionally a crisis call may arise. Always take these calls seriously. When the volunteer has established that a caller is in a crisis, the volunteer can quickly refer the caller to 911, suggest they go to the hospital, or call the Crisis Hotline at (855) NMCISIS

Calls From Friends And Family Members

Many calls come from family members or friends who are concerned with the welfare of the person who is using drugs. We must remember that our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. If the addict is there and willing to talk with the volunteer, great; if not, suggest that the family member attend an open meeting to find out more about Narcotics Anonymous. It can be suggested that the caller bring along the addict who is still suffering. Second, the family member can be asked to give the phonline number to that individual. Family members often want us to talk to an addict who is unwilling to do anything about his/her problem or they want us to call them personally. We cannot do this. Tell them that the addict needs to call us or be willing to get on the telephone. We can only help someone who is willing to help themselves. Remember to treat the family member or friend with kindness and the utmost patience.

Phonline Flowchart



Solid Line — Follow to next step
 Dotted Line Optional next step

This is a guideline, it is not possible to account for every possible situation

