



Update

A NEWSLETTER FOR PROFESSIONALS

Starting an NA Meeting

(This article is excerpted from the April 1995 issue of NA Update.)

You're intrigued by what you've heard or read about Narcotics Anonymous. You believe in the therapeutic value of drug addicts helping other addicts, and you like the way NA has structured and supported that kind of interaction. The simplicity of Narcotics Anonymous appeals to you, with its rented meeting rooms, its minimal voluntary organization, its commitment to self-support and the minding of its own affairs, and its nonprofessional, no-fees-or-dues program.

But what if there is no Narcotics Anonymous in your community?

If there are no NA meetings in your community, we would like to suggest that you start one. Is this a complicated process? Not at all. To make the process even simpler, we have prepared a handbook and start-up checklist for new NA groups. These materials are available upon request from our World Service Office, free of charge.

The Group Booklet is a twenty-page primer on organizing, conducting, and maintaining a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. It is currently available in English, French, Spanish, German, and both continental and Brazilian Portuguese. We have also prepared a checklist of the most important details that need to be squared away before opening a new NA meeting. The Group Booklet, the new-group checklist, and a sample NA literature kit are free from our World Service Office for those opening new meetings.

Professionals typically face three challenges when starting Narcotics Anonymous meetings. We want to offer you some suggestions in dealing with them. First, it is very easy for a Narcotics Anonymous meeting started by a professional to become closely associated with, if not indistinguishable from, the professional's own organization. The problem with this is that it undercuts two of the driving forces behind the growth of NA worldwide: its independence, and its tradition of self-support.

If a Narcotics Anonymous meeting is held in a treatment facility, it is very helpful to emphasize the distinction between the two so that Narcotics Anonymous is seen by addicts attending the meeting as an independent organization, not merely an extension of the facility's treatment program. And when a treatment professional starts an NA meeting, we encourage the professional to turn the meeting over to the recovering addicts who are drawn into the new NA group as quickly as possible

so that the new local Narcotics Anonymous movement continues in the tradition of "addicts helping addicts."

The second challenge that professionals sometimes face when starting NA meetings comes in the translation of Narcotics Anonymous literature. NA's message is contained in and transmitted through its literature. If there is no NA literature published in the language spoken in your community, you will very likely be anxious to get the translation process started as soon as possible. Our primary concern here is to urge you to contact the translations staff at our World Service Office first, at the beginning rather than the end of the translation process, so that we can provide maximum assistance in resolving the problems that arise at different stages of almost every translation project.

The third and final challenge professionals have faced when starting Narcotics Anonymous meetings, in our experience, has been to maintain the distinction between NA and other similar or related organizations, especially Alcoholics Anonymous. This is quite natural, considering that Narcotics Anonymous grew out of AA and bases its program of recovery from drug addiction on AA's Twelve Steps. However, NA is a program that is distinct from AA; NA offers recovery from addiction to all drugs, while AA focuses exclusively on recovery from alcoholism. We believe that it is helpful to the addict seeking recovery to maintain the distinction between Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, helping ensure that the addict does not become confused about the services either fellowship offers.

For more information on starting a new Narcotics Anonymous meeting, please [contact](#) Jeff Gershoff, WSO Group Services Coordinator, at extension 131.

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