

SFRSC AREA ADDITIONAL NEEDS GUIDELINE

Statement of Purpose: The South Florida Regional Public Relations is committed to supporting the right of every addict to find recovery through Narcotics Anonymous. This guideline is to help groups, Areas and Region with suggestions on what to do when faced with accessibility issues in reference to addicts with physical, visual and hearing disabilities. Seniors in Narcotics Anonymous will be addressed in another guideline.

It is suggested that Region/Areas have on hand the following literature to assist them. Although the literature does have outdated information, it is a good base guideline with which to start (some of the outdated information will be addressed and updated in this guideline):

1. Additional Needs Resource Information (Booklet)
2. IP 26 Additional Needs
3. The Group (Booklet) (in particular the section on "Where can we hold NA Meetings?")

Groups may not know what to do if an addict with a disability comes to attend their meetings, especially if they have never before encountered the situation. Another challenge is a disabled person coming to a meeting for the first time. Additionally, there are meetings that are located with buildings with limited or no access. Here are some "do's" and "don't" to assist you:

Physical disability: Some addicts will obviously show their disability by being in a wheelchair/scooter, walker or cane or have an obvious problem with walking. What you can do to help will depend if your meeting place is accessible or not.

- 1) If your meeting place is accessible, ask if the member needs any help. If they are able to navigate by themselves, nothing further needs to be done.
- 2) If your meeting place is not accessible, or has limited accessibility:

Talk with the member and see what can be done to assist them. Some members can access the meeting with a bit of help. Only give assistance as the member directs.

If the meeting place is not accessible, please do NOT tell them to just go to another meeting. You have no idea if that addict wants to use right at that moment. The addict is going to be embarrassed that they cannot gain access to the meeting and may just want to isolate and run away. Talk with the addict. If possible, for that particular meeting, move the meeting outside. At the least, have several addicts come outside and have a mini meeting with the addict. Also, get a meeting list and help the addict locate meetings that are designed handicapped accessible. But never just turn the addict away.

SFRSC AREA ADDITIONAL NEEDS GUIDELINE

Additionally, do NOT offer to carry the addict inside or upstairs. There is too much probability of injury to either the disabled addict or to you. This is even if the addict asks you to carry him/her. The risk of injury, and possible lawsuit, is just too high. This also includes trying to pick up a power chair. They are very heavy and the probability of damaging the chair or yourself is quite high.

Visual disability: It may be obvious that a member is visually impaired if they are using a white cane or a service dog. Also, senior members may have some vision impairments due to cataracts or loss of vision with age (to include not seeing well in the dark)

- 1) Having a well lit entry way will assist those with limited vision
- 2) Always ask if the member needs help. If they do, they will direct you as to the best way to help them.
- 3) Audio literature is great to have for those with vision impairments (as well as addicts who are limited in reading ability)
- 4) DON'T grab the addict by the arm and try to lead them. Just follow their directions.

Hearing disability: It can be difficult to tell if a member has a hearing disability. Hopefully, the member will let someone know of any needs.

If the member is wearing hearing aids:

- 1) Try to insure the member is seated in an optimal seat:
 - A) When the speaker is in the front of the room, a seat in the front is best.
 - B) When in a group, or circle/square type setting, a seat maximizing view of the greatest number of group members is best.

If the member is deaf:

- 1) Ask the member what is the best way to communicate.
- 2) Face the member when speaking and be mindful of the conversation. If you look away while speaking, or change topic without warning, it can be difficult for someone who reads lips to follow the conversation.

Meeting and Phone Lists: Areas can list the meetings that are handicapped accessible on their phone lists. Also, having the phone answering service also include asking if someone needs a

SFRSC AREA ADDITIONAL NEEDS GUIDELINE

handicapped accessible meeting will avoid having a new member being told to go to one that is not accessible.

Area Accessibility Tool: is a simple check list to see if a meeting is totally accessible. The parking lot questions are a bonus and not something that will mean that the meeting is not accessible.

Some additional information:

- 1) Have questions about service dogs and other types of animals in meetings? Please refer to the "Guidelines for Service Dogs in Narcotics Anonymous meetings". It will answer the majority of questions.
- 2) For the group that comes on an access situation and does not know how to handle it:
 - A. First, please tell the person with the situation that you acknowledge their situation and you will work on it. Do Not ignore the situation. Bring the situation to Area's immediate attention.
 - B. If the Area does not know how to handle the access question, please contact Regional PR POC Additional Needs for assistance.

In the future, PR/POC Additional Needs will be conducting workshops at group requests and sending out a survey to ascertain how many addicts Areas have with additional needs. This will enable Additional Needs to assist those Areas. Additionally, we will offer a free conference call, which also works well with hearing impaired, for those with additional needs to talk about their challenges and how they can best be served. We will also be writing specific guidelines that explain what groups need legally to be accessible and what the accessibility criteria is. Please remember that we do know that not every meeting will be accessible. However, we can strive to make existing meetings more accessible with cost effective way and aim to have more meetings, especially new meetings, be accessible.

Lastly, any guideline that refers specifically to law will have the following disclaimer:

Disclaimer: Narcotics Anonymous does not enforce the law. This listing of the law, and the consequences for groups not complying with the law, are included so that your group can make a fully informed choice. This is in line with Chapter 4 in the Basic Text: "We believe that the sooner we face our problems within our society, in everyday living, just that much faster do we become acceptable, responsible and productive members of that society." Additionally,

SFRSC AREA ADDITIONAL NEEDS GUIDELINE

Narcotics Anonymous supports the right of every addict to find recovery through Narcotics Anonymous. To assist Groups and the NA Service Structure to fulfill Tradition 3 and Tradition 5 in reaching out to those with Additional Needs, the following guidelines are being provided. This guideline is only a general guidance on a complex set of issues. Groups and Service Entities may find that their situation may not be covered in these guidelines. In these cases, or at any time, it is highly encouraged to contact your Area, Region, Regional PR Additional Needs POC or NAWS to obtain further assistance.