

MRSCNA PHONE LINE WORKSHOP

AGENDA

1. WHAT IS THE NA PHONE LINE?

- A. The Service Structure as it relates to the Phone Line
- B. The History of the Phone Line
- C. The Phone Line and The Traditions

2. PHONE LINE VOLUNTEERS

- A. Qualifications/Duties for Phone Line Volunteers
- B. What Caller's Hear/How OneBox.com Works
- C. Do's and Don'ts
- D. Questions and Suggestions

3. COMMON PHONE LINE CALLS

- A. Discussion
- B. Questions and Suggestions

4. ROLE PLAYING

5. CLOSE

The Phone Line is a function of the MRSCNA
Phone Line Subcommittee, and is operated
by the Areas and Groups in the Region using
suggested Regional Subcommittee
guidelines.

The Phone Line is funded from donations
by the Groups and Areas and through
Regional activities.

MRSCNA PHONE LINE HISTORY

The Phone Line was originally started at the end of 1982 under the direction of the Public Information Committee of the Kanawha Valley area Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous. The service consisted initially of a telephone answering machine placed in Room 225 of St. John's Episcopal Church in downtown Charleston. At this time this was the location of 4 of our meetings, and the area believed it to be the most convenient and regularly accessible. The machine was placed in the file cabinet of the Charleston Central Group and was later broken into and stolen. The area then purchased another answering machine and a two drawer file cabinet to replace our loss. The file cabinet was padlocked and bolted to the wall which proved to be successful.

Our first answering machine did not have a beeper and had to be checked regularly for calls that had been left. Our next acquisition did have a beeper which proved to be beneficial. The person responsible for carrying the beeper had to call at specific times to play back the calls. The main problem with the beeper system was that we had very few people responsible enough to check the calls regularly. Thus the burden fell upon the shoulders of a few. The committee felt that callers were uncomfortable talking to a recording instead of a live voice, primarily because of the number of hang-ups. We also had a problem with the file cabinet being in the meeting room, such that we sometimes received calls during a meeting, which could be disruptive.

The original area covered the Kanawha Valley area and surrounding communities. We had our number listed in the Charleston and local telephone directories, and tried to make our number known to all persons, or organizations, which the committee felt pertinent. Interview with WCHS TVS and the Charleston Newspapers were conducted. We also held a press conference to which all types of media representatives were invited. Our meeting schedule was placed on the community calendar section of the Charleston Daily Mail along with our phone numbers. Also, we printed stickers with the number and placed them in public areas we felt accessible to people in need; and had the number run on a 24-hour news and information station in Nitro.

In the summer of 1985, with our fellowship and resources growing by leaps and bounds, the answering service expanded and was moved to Capital Radio Telephone in Charleston. Approximately 2 months later, the responsibilities were assumed by the Mountaineer Region Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous, and the area auctioned the answering machine to a member during a fund raiser.

Since 1985, we have expanded our public serve announcements to include radio and TV spots, and continued to improve our Phone Line service. On February 15, 1990, we implemented a toll free 800 number accessible from all 48 continental states.

In April of 2010, the Region's Phone Line services were upgraded to use a virtual receptionist through OneBox.com. Through this system, calls for the help-line are sent directly to our volunteer's personal phones.

It's important to remember that our resources were very limited and we did the best we could with what we had. From a single answering machine in a locked file cabinet in Charleston, WV, to a 24-hour toll free help-line, we've done a lot of growing. Our service has certainly had some shortcomings but it's been far better than nothing and has served our primary purpose to carry the message.

Twelve Traditions and the Phone Line

1. Our common welfare; the Phone Line brings groups and areas together for unity and the survival of NA.
 2. By being on the Phone Line, we are servants of the NA and we are performing a basic service function - carrying the message.
 3. As an addict, you are not required to be of service to the Phone Line and we do have a 9-month clean time requirement.
 4. As a Phone Line volunteer, you have to be highly aware of this tradition. You are serving as a front-line representative for the fellowship and what you say has a direct impact on how the caller perceives NA. Use the literature.
 5. Serving on the Phone Line is a direct way of carrying the message - know the message: *That an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use and find a new way to live.*
 6. We offer a method of recovery from addiction. Don't endorse treatment centers or recommend other 12-Step programs. This Tradition can raise a real challenge in rural areas where solutions are limited. You can refer to 911 or other help/hot lines.
 7. The Phone Line is paid for only from donations from the fellowship and is supported by time, commitment and willingness.
 8. We pay OneBox.com for their services.
 9. We have a Phone Line subcommittee at the regional level that is responsible to the fellowship and the individual groups.
 10. Always keep personal opinions to yourself; politely bow out of confrontations. We should never bad mouth other recovery methods or fellowships nor should we endorse or denounce treatment centers.
 11. Don't give out phone number or discuss any individual who attends meetings. Inform any press about our policies and give their numbers/addresses to the PR chair from your area or region. Don't promise presentations. We don't pay for advertisement.
 12. Keep principles first and take the responsibility to see that the call is answered. Do what needs to be done regardless of personal wishes.
-

MRSCNA Phone Line Volunteer

Qualifications and Duties

Qualifications:

Minimum of nine months clean time

Working knowledge of Twelve Steps and Traditions

Time and willingness necessary to serve

Attendance of one Phone Line workshop per calendar year

Have a personal phone number available

Duties:

Read *A Guide to Phone Line Services*

Read all Subcommittee material pertaining to Phone Line

Attend Phone Line Subcommittee meetings if possible

Adhere to Area Subcommittee guidelines

Obtain pertinent information from answering service

Leave no call unhandled regardless of circumstances

Use the Do's and Don'ts of Phone Line Service in answering calls

Report any problems to the Regional Phone Line Chair or Vice Chair

Also be aware that:

Your name and phone number will be published on a Regional Phone Line Volunteer Calling List, and distributed to all Area Phone Line Subcommittees.

If your phone number is disconnected or changed, please contact the Regional Phone Line Chair or Vice Chair so that your name can be removed from the list or updated.

Phone Line Service is a 24 hour, seven day a week commitment. And by being on the list there is a possibility that your services might be needed any hour of the day to return a call for a volunteer that is unable to do so.

What Caller's Hear/How OneBox.com Works:

Thank you for calling the Mountaineer Region of Narcotics Anonymous. If you or someone you love has a drug problem and would like to talk to a member of Narcotics Anonymous please press 1. For information about our Convention at Cedar Lakes in Ripley, West Virginia please press 2. If you are a professional calling for information about Narcotics Anonymous please press 3. For our most up to date meeting information, please visit us on the web at mrsrna.org or press 1 to speak to a member. For any other business please press 4. Thank you for calling.

When a caller presses 1, they hear a female computer recording that says: Please stay on the line while we connect you with a member of Narcotics Anonymous. The caller then hears music on hold.

1. Onebox has been upgraded so that when a caller presses 1 the software calls all the Phone Line volunteers who are in the particular time slot in which the call is received. It now calls up to 5 numbers simultaneously. Whoever answers 1st will get the call and the others will see that another member has answered. This is important because in the past it would only call one number at a time and a caller could be on hold for a very long time.
2. It cannot be stressed enough the importance of taking the call. Please don't assume because it is dialing multiple numbers that someone else will get it! If the call is not taken after 5 rings it will be routed to voicemail and the Phone Line Chair persons will be notified via email and/or text message. We get a a lot of callers who just hang up at this point and never leave a message hence they never receive the potential life-saving information they were seeking.
3. If you receive a Phone Line call, it will come from one of these 2 numbers: 888-981-5444 or 866-643-6660. Please save these in your contacts as Phone Line Hotline or something similar so that when you receive a call, it won't be mistaken for a telemarketer or other non-priority call.

NA PHONE LINE

DO'S AND DON'Ts

1. DO: Identify yourself with your first name only and state that you are an addict.

DON'T: Identify yourself as an addict, mention NA, or leave a message with anyone other than the original caller. If you get an answering machine, HANG UP.

2. DO: Find out what the caller needs. Have necessary material, i.e. meeting schedule, close to the phone in order to avoid delays.

DON'T: Answer questions about who attended NA meetings, accept personal messages, or acknowledge anyone's membership in our Fellowship.

3. DO: Make appropriate referrals when necessary. (Community services referral listing) Remember that we are addicts sharing our experience strength and hope about recovery in NA.

DON'T: Try to handle calls that we are not qualified to answer, i.e. Crisis, issues beyond our boundaries.

4. DO: Try to get the addict to a meeting!!! If it's not the addict calling encourage the caller to have the addict call.

DON'T: Go on a twelve step call or to pick up someone for a meeting alone.

5. DO: Remember to be helpful and polite to ALL callers, and when picking up calls from our answering service.

DON'T: Argue with people whose view on addiction differs from NA. Don't glorify active addiction by telling war stories.

6. DO: Tell someone if you are not sure whether you handled a call properly. Call another Phone Line volunteer or the Phone Line Chair. This will allow us to correct the situation if necessary.

DON'T: Allow someone who is not a qualified Phone Line Volunteer to take a call regardless of the circumstances, or leave a call unanswered.

Common Phone Line Calls

General:

The first thing to be determined when answering a call, is whether the caller is an addict seeking help, or non-addict seeking information. By identifying in the first few minutes what type of request we are answering, we are able to keep non-addict calls brief.

Non-Addict Calls (professionals, students, media):

Calls from non-addicts are usually request for general information about NA. The caller can be advised that information packets are available. In this case the volunteer takes the name and address of the caller and either mails the packet or contacts Area PR Chair to do mailing. Non-addicts can also be referred to open meetings. Callers requesting speakers, presentations and special meetings are given a brief description of NA. The volunteer explains that these request need to be handled by a member of Public Relations Subcommittee. Volunteer takes the name and phone number of the caller and passes it along to the appropriate PR contact.

Non-Addict Calls (friends and family members):

Many calls come from family members or friends concerned about the welfare of an addict. Ask if the addict is there and if they are willing to talk to the volunteer. If not, suggest the caller attend an open meeting and bring along the addict if possible. Also suggest the caller give the Phone Line number to the addict. Family members often want us to call or talk to an addict who is unwilling to do anything about their problem. We CANNOT do this!!! Explain that we can only help someone who is willing to help themselves. Tell them the addict needs to call us. Remember to treat the caller with kindness and patience. If they persist in telling us how they feel, make referral to appropriate number.

Talking to an Addict:

The most important calls received are from potential new comers. The volunteer will give a brief description of the NA Program, share some of their experience and explain what the caller can expect at an NA meeting. Give the caller information (time, location, directions) about the nearest available meeting. Offer to meet them or have someone meet them at the meeting. Explain the difference between an open and a closed meeting in case the addict has a ride or wants to bring someone with them. If they are not sure they can get to the meeting, because of transportation, tell them you might be able to find them a ride. If you can pick them up, **DO NOT GO ALONE.....TAKE SOMEONE WITH YOU!!!!** And arrange to meet in a public place. Inform them that NA has a **MUST** that, **NO DRUGS OR PARAPHERNALIA** be on their person. If volunteer cannot pick them up, try to arrange for someone else to, using the same guidelines. If this is not possible, be sure to call the addict back and explain and try to set up for another meeting. If the caller is not sure they want to attend a meeting or stop using, don't try to talk them into it or convince them that they **NEED** to. Tell them that when they are ready, to call back, we will be here. Remember, our primary objective is to get the addict to a meeting. We can carry the message of recovery to the caller when we express that we were once suffering ourselves, we care and are willing to help, and our program works for those who want to quit using.