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# NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

Hospitals  
Institutions  
and the N.A.  
Member

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## HOSPITALS, INSTITUTIONS, AND THE N.A. MEMBER

We know that addiction leads to “jails, institutions and death,” and that N.A.’s primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. It’s not surprising, then, that carrying the message into hospitals and institutions is one of our top priorities. N.A. members have consistently supported this belief by forming hospitals and institutions (H&I) committees worldwide. Still, some N.A. members have been reluctant to get involved in H&I work because they have never spent time in an institution or hospital, or because they were afraid they had nothing to offer. This pamphlet is intended to be a brief introduction to Narcotics Anonymous hospitals and institutions work, and to encourage more members to avail themselves of this opportunity to serve.

The stories included in this pamphlet parallel those of thousands of other N.A. members who have been involved in H&I. They illustrate the fact that even though H&I work may at times seem intimidating, and we all sometimes ask, “what do I have to offer,” the results consistently turn out to be worth the effort.

One member had been clean in N.A. for three years, but was beginning to feel that something was missing in his recovery. His sponsor, a long-time H&I supporter, suggested that he get involved in an H&I panel in a prison as a way of working his Twelfth Step. He was somewhat reluctant to do that because he had never been in prison; he was afraid he had nothing to share that “those people” could relate to. He was willing to follow the sponsor’s example, though, and get involved in H&I in spite of his fears. Not only was he well received by the inmates, who he came to realize were just like himself (only they got caught), he was also revitalized in his recovery. He was still active on the H&I committee two and one half years later, when his job took him out of the area.

A member of Narcotics Anonymous had been in and out of detox centers for years, and had

never heard of N.A. Finally she found herself in a detox in which an N.A. H&I panel was held, and she had her first exposure to the Fellowship. “I had never heard people share that way before!” she said later. “I was expecting the same old message that people had been giving me for years: ‘You can’t ever use drugs again.’ Instead, I heard the N.A. message: ‘You don’t have to use, just for today.’” That simple message provided her first ray of hope. She got involved in N.A. at that moment, and continued to be involved after her release. She spent some months going to meetings and working the steps with her sponsor, and was then asked to sit on that panel as a N.A. speaker. She was grateful for a chance to give back some of what she had received. She has since participated in numerous panels, both as a panel leader and a panel member, and has several years of clean time. “I never say no to an H&I request,” she says. “That’s the most rewarding part of my recovery.”

A third member of our Fellowship was doing time in prison when he first heard of Narcotics Anonymous. Near the end of his stay, he decided to try one of the meetings that had been held there every week. He did not immediately become involved in this Fellowship, but he later stated that he did not realize how much a single exposure to N.A. had affected him—he had learned about the solution. He began using shortly after his release from prison, and soon saw his life going back in the same old direction. In his desperation, he remembered the N.A. institutional meeting, and he sought out an N.A. meeting. That was the beginning of his recovery. Now, over three years later, he is active in H&I work at the group, area and regional levels. He has completed a term as regional H&I chairperson, and regularly takes panels into institutions.

Working with others in an institutional setting, if approached with respect for our steps and traditions, consistently enhances personal recovery. “Hospitals and institutions work has lent a new sense of life and vigor to my recovery,” says one experienced member. “I have learned more about the spiritual basis of the Twelfth Step since I

started carrying the message inside institutions than I ever did in all my reading and talking about it before that time. To watch the eyes of someone who is hearing the N.A. message for the first time slowly come to life, to see that person begin to ask questions and get the first glimmer of hope that maybe there is a way out, and to later see that person at a meeting on the outside accepting a chip or keytag—how can I measure the value of these experiences? I only know that they are at the heart of my spiritual awakening today.”

These statements are common among N.A. members who are active in H&I work. Any N.A. member who wants to put the steps into practice, whether or not he or she has spent time in an institution, is encouraged to look into H&I work. Guidelines for H&I committees and meetings are available from the World Service Office. These should be read carefully, because they contain experience that may help anyone involved in H&I work avoid pitfalls others have fallen into. If you are interested, ask your group's GSR for more information on how you can get involved. Be prepared for an adventure.



**This is N.A. Conference-approved literature**

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