



Narcotics Anonymous®

IP No. 26

**Accessibility
for Those with
Additional Needs**

and enlarge items may be available to help visually impaired addicts access our literature. Also, most addicts with visual impairment have friends in the fellowship who are willing to record various pieces of recovery literature. (*A word of caution:* anyone who agrees to record literature should be careful to read the text exactly as it is written without personal interpretation or editorial comments included.) In addition, it is now possible by using computers and special devices and software, to scan, enlarge, and even read literature to individuals who cannot see. When using technology, it is important to remember that as with any other copyrighted material, limits are placed on the reproduction and distribution of NA literature. The guidelines for each situation may vary, so it is best to contact the WSO with any questions.

Meetings

When providing transportation to visually impaired addicts, there are some practical considerations to keep in mind. For example, do not honk the horn unless you are sure that the person will recognize your car. If someone is carrying a white cane, anyone traveling with him or her should either get out of the way or announce their own location. Some visually impaired addicts may need guidance up and down stairs, hallways, or to and from the car. Those with a guide dog may need little assistance, if any, as the dog is trained to do most of the work.

In most cases, visually impaired persons will ask for the information they need in order to be comfortable within their surroundings. A few minutes should be spent pointing out emergency exits, restrooms, and if necessary, the layout of the restroom. They may also need help getting coffee and finding a seat. As a courtesy, have everyone in

the meeting introduce themselves. When greeting a person who is visually impaired, be sure to request a hug before making physical contact and do not touch their dog without asking permission. Just as importantly, never stay silent if a visually impaired addict enters the room alone. Each visually impaired addict's needs may be different, but there is one rule that applies to every case: *never* grab, pull, or push a visually impaired individual in an effort to be helpful. When in doubt as to the level of assistance someone needs, ask.

Addicts in Wheelchairs and Mobility Impaired

Although circumstances have changed in recent years to make recovery possible for most addicts, many meetings are still not accessible to addicts using wheelchairs. In this case, accessibility means more than being able to pass through the front door, such as an operable ramp into the facility with parking nearby, restrooms which allow access to everyone, wide doorways, and meeting rooms which are not congested. Make sure your meeting location meets these minimum standards of accessibility. If it does not, seek a location that does if you want your meeting to be accessible by all addicts. These considerations should also be made for all NA functions, service meetings, and conventions. Make sure that meeting lists and flyers identify meetings and/or events as wheelchair accessible, and be sure to provide H&I and PI subcommittees with this information.

Once an accessible facility has been secured, individuals can help by volunteering to greet and assist addicts in wheelchairs. The volunteers need only to be willing to provide a smile, a greeting and a hug, and be able to lift and carry a wheelchair if necessary.

For more information about accessibility for those with additional needs, please refer to *Additional Needs Resource Information* (WSO Catalog Item No. 2114).

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