

Portland Area Narcotics Anonymous Phonenumber Handbook



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Section 1: Introduction to Phonenumber Service

Welcome and thank you for joining the Portland Area Phonenumber of Narcotics Anonymous. As phonenumber shift volunteers you are performing a valuable service when answering the phones for N. A. The response and attitude of a volunteer can have a lasting impression. Answering the phonenumber is a great way to give back and to assure that “no addict seeking recovery need die without having a chance to find a better way of life” The primary objective is to direct the potential newcomer to an N.A. meeting.

“Our ability to effectively carry the N.A. message greatly depends on our strong local phonenumber services. A strong local phonenumber helps us help addicts. Our phonenumber are an opportunity to form cooperative relationships that may benefit potential N.A. members. Our N.A. phonenumber is a service that we provide on the other people’s terms. We have heard members share about how their first call to N.A. phonenumber either helped them find N.A. or made it more difficult. Our ability to respond to callers in a sensitive, caring, and helpful way can make a real difference in whether or not an addict gets clean and finds recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.”



The Phonenumber’s main goal is to get the addict to a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous.

Your Role as a Phonenumber Volunteer

The ideal Phonenumber volunteer has qualities such as integrity, the ability to listen, and sound judgment. As a Phonenumber volunteer you are part of the Public Relations effort of Narcotics Anonymous in your area and community. You are the “voice” of N.A. and represent the fellowship to both suffering addicts and the general public. You must be able to relate well with a wide variety of people, and communicate effectively whether you are simply giving information about a meeting place, or speaking with an addict in active addiction. The ability to stay calm under pressure, remain objective, and support callers in a professional manner are the keystone of a successful Phone line volunteer.

When speaking with callers, remain objective and non-argumentative. Remember, you are likely to be the first contact a person has with Narcotics Anonymous. A warm, friendly voice will reassure a frightened, uneasy person in need of help. Always respect the confidential aspects of your role as a phonenumber volunteer. If you’re returning a call, be certain the person requesting help is on the line before identifying yourself as an addict or a member of Narcotics Anonymous.

Volunteer Policies

Never give names or phone numbers to callers. This includes other Phonenumber volunteers and any members of Narcotics Anonymous. If you get a call from someone looking for members such as sub-committee chairs, get the caller's name and phone number (and or email address) and contact the Public Relations Chairperson so that they may contact the appropriate person.

Don't harbor doubts or frustrations about your position as a phonenumber volunteer. If you run into any problems or have questions contact the PR Chairperson, Vice chairperson, or the Phonenumber Coordinator.

Your prompt and regular availability at the time of your shift is imperative, this means being prepared and available for your shift. If you are unable to cover your shift, it's your responsibility to find a replacement who is a trained phonenumber volunteer. Then contact the Shift Coordinator no less than two hours prior to the shift change.

Protocol for Shift Coverage:

If possible, email all the volunteers on the shift schedule to see if they can cover your shift.

If no volunteer responds to your plea for coverage then call some of the volunteers.

If the volunteers are unable to cover your shift you have done all that you can do. At that point you let the Shift Coordinator know that you have done your best to get your shift covered.

Emergency Shift Coverage: If you have an emergency and you can't cover your shift. Please text or call the Shift Coordinator, Phonenumber Coordinator, and PR chairperson or vice chair.

Qualifications for Volunteers

The following requirements apply to all Phonenumber volunteers:

- Must be an active member of Narcotics Anonymous, attend meetings regularly, and have the required clean time requirements.
- Have a working knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of N.A.

Cause for Removal of Volunteers

It is up to the discretion of the PR Chairperson and the Phonenumber Coordinator to remove a volunteer at any time. Some of the following are grounds for removal:

- Relapse will result in immediate removal from the committee.
- Continuing to fail to respond to the calls on your shift.
- Repeat occurrences of dropping a shift without sufficient reason or not finding a replacement
- Taking physical, emotional, sexual, or financial advantage of a caller.
- Volunteers should NEVER use foul language, ever! A call to the NA phonenumber may be someone's first interaction with Narcotics Anonymous. We should always take special care to present ourselves in a professional manner.
- If you continually disregard any of the written guidelines.
- If removed, we encourage you to return and will welcome you back when you are able to meet the volunteer requirements.

Section 2: Preparing for your shift

Take a few minutes before your shift starts to make sure that all the information you may need to give is accurate and up-to-date. When a caller asks for information for an event or meeting, it is important that you have the most current information. You can always refer callers to our website www.portlandna.com. This website is also a resource for you to check current schedules and any new activities information. It is better to give no information than wrong information.

Phoneline Handbook

It is the Phoneline volunteer's responsibility to keep this Handbook, which contains valuable resource information and procedures, with you at all times during your Phoneline shift. You will also need current meeting schedules, Activities at a Glance, and other information on hand. You may wish to pick up fliers at meetings to have on hand so that you have the location, time, and other information about upcoming events.

Phoneline Log

Every Phoneline volunteer is expected to record information about calls received using the Phoneline Log, which can be found at the back of this packet. *The Phoneline log needs to be filled out for each and every shift.* At the completion of each shift, the completed Phoneline log should be forwarded to the people listed at the bottom of the Phoneline Log. The easiest way for this to be done is electronically via email. If you save the log to the desktop on your computer and complete with each and every call as it is happening, forwarding at the end of your shift, you are less likely to forget about it later. Another way to do this is to enter the pertinent call information by hand on a blank "hard" copy of the Phoneline Log, then transfer that information to the electronic or "soft" copy when your computer is available. If you do not have a computer, or Internet access, you will need to communicate with the sub-committee members and other volunteers by phone or by mail. We will accommodate your needs if this is the case.

When completing the Phoneline Log, please be as detailed as possible. This form gives the Public Relations sub-committee vital information about how our NA information is reaching the public. It provides details about our callers—*who* they are, *where* they are, *what* they need, and *how* they found out about the NA Phoneline. With this information, we can make informed decisions about the future of our Phoneline and what changes, if any, may be needed to better serve the fellowship and our community.

Using Technology

Whether you are using a cell phone or a land line, familiarize yourself with your phone's features and functions. For example, you may have set up "answer tones" or a personal voicemail message; however, while you are on shift, you must remove any answer tones from your phone and change your voicemail to a generic message. In case you don't get to a call, your voicemail message should be "NA Phonenumber" or simply "Thank you for calling, I'll return your call as soon as possible." If you have call waiting, it is important to politely ask the caller to hold for a minute so you can answer the other call. If you have the capability of conference or 3-way calling, you should be comfortable using this feature, as it will be very useful if you have a call involving suicide or a medical emergency.

Your computer or smartphone with internet access will be very helpful during your work as a Phonenumber volunteer. For example, you can help callers with specific directions to meetings (using MapQuest or Google Maps), or go to www.portlandna.com to find the most up-to-date information about meetings and activities in our Area. You will also need to regularly follow-up on important emails from the PR Chairperson, Phonenumber Coordinator, and Shift Coordinator, as well as send emails to other volunteers when you wish to have someone cover your shift. If you do not have a computer, or Internet access, you will need to communicate with the sub-committee members and other volunteers by phone or, in the case of Phonenumber Logs, by mail. We will accommodate your needs if this is the case.

How Our Phonenumber System Works

After you attend orientation each volunteer is assigned an extension number and added to the database. We add your name and phone number and each extension is set up to five rings. It is important that your personal voice mail is set to answer on the 6th ring not earlier.

All of our shifts are either 5 or 8 hour shifts. The transfer of calls happens automatically, when your shift starts our system automatically sends all incoming calls from our Phonenumber to your phone. This is why it's important to be prepared for your shift each week. If you have a smart-phone, usually there is a calendar program. It's always a good idea to program your shift in your phone as a reminder of your shift.

Important information is that calls will come in without names. It will show up on your phone as a number or it could show up on your phone as an unknown number or private number. It's important to answer all calls during your shift.

Missed Calls

Missed calls happen. The most important thing to remember is to call the caller back. When you know that you have missed a call be sure to call the caller back and notify the Phonenumber Coordinator that you have missed a call and that you have returned the call. If you don't know that you have missed a call you will receive a phone call from the Phonenumber Coordinator informing you of the missed call and you will need to call the caller back.

Please remember anonymity is important when we return calls. When handling missed calls please make sure that you actually have the caller on the phone before mentioning that you're calling from the Narcotics Anonymous.

If you have a voice mail and you're returning a call. You can simply say "Hello my name is ?? and I'm trying to reach ?? and I'm returning their call".

If your returning a call from a missed call that shows up on your caller id without a voice mail, just simply say "I missed a call from this number". If the caller asks, who's calling, just say "I'm calling from a helpline number."

If the call goes to your personal voicemail be sure to check your messages and return those calls using the above procedures. As with all calls, please be sure to log that information on your call log.

Section 3 – Types of Calls

Although you will receive many different types of calls each day on the NA Phonenumber, it is important to remember that our *primary purpose* is to help addicts find meetings and NA activities in our fellowship. While there are many other resources in our community, from detox centers to recovery housing and treatment programs, you are volunteering on behalf of the Public Relations Phonenumber sub-committee of Narcotics Anonymous. In that role, you are asked to provide information about Narcotics Anonymous and to keep in mind our sixth tradition, which states: *“An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.”* In following this tradition, you should always carry a clear message of recovery in NA, because our message is our identity and we do not wish to confuse it with beliefs or programs of other organizations or institutions.

In the spirit of cooperation, you may be asked to refer callers to other 12 step programs or agencies within our community. Just be mindful that we do not “endorse” these organizations or “recommend” a particular treatment facility or program. A complete list of local resources can be found in Appendix A of this Handbook.

Meetings and Other Member Information

It is your responsibility to have the most recent Portland Meeting Schedule and Activities at a Glance while you are on shift. You can pick these up at meetings, at the monthly Phonenumber business meeting, or online at www.portlandna.com. As a Phonenumber volunteer, you will be notified by email when there is updated information, such as new or removed meetings, place or time changes, etc. You should take the time to familiarize yourself with our meeting schedule, which includes information about public transportation, type of meeting (closed, candlelight, child friendly, etc.), as well as address information. Since you will often receive calls regarding upcoming or current events, make sure you are informed of locations and dates for any activities in our area.

Public Relations Calls and Referrals

You may get Narcotics Anonymous “business” related calls. For example, someone wanting to start a meeting, have schedules sent to them, community requests, a treatment facility wanting to start a meeting, etc. **DO NOT** attempt to help these callers yourself, get their name and phone number, and email if possible, and pass that information on to the Public Relations Chairperson. Get as much information as you can about what they want. You can follow the Referral Form (at the back of this Orientation packet) to know what types of questions to ask. Let them know you will be passing on their name and phone number and that someone will return their call. Relay the

message to the Chairperson as soon as possible, via text, phone call, or email. Leave your name and phone number if you leave a message with an answering machine or another person and always request confirmation that your message has been received.

There are times when trusted servants within the area or at the regional service committee may be more experienced with answering certain phonline questions or requests. When referring someone to an administrative person of our area or subcommittee chair, remember to never give out their personal phone number. Write down as much information as possible, including the caller's name and phone number, as well as the nature of their question or request. It's important to get as much detail as possible from the caller so the person calling back will be well informed of the request. As with a Public Relations call, Referrals should be directed to the Public Relations Chairperson via text, phone call, or email. The Chairperson will forward the request to the appropriate person (s).

Crisis Calls

We are an information service only and are not qualified to handle emergency situations. **DO NOT** give medical diagnosis or medical advice! **DO NOT** offer detox suggestions, even if you have had a similar experience. We are not medical professionals!

Suicide calls: Fortunately these do not come in very often, but they do come in. These calls can make us feel very uncomfortable. It is essential to recognize that we are not trained in suicide prevention. We can best help by putting these callers in contact with 911. Always take a suicide call seriously! Never assume it's a joke. If your phone has conference or 3-way calling capability, you may find this feature helpful. You can keep the caller on the line, while you contact 911.

Overdose: If the caller has overdosed, first try to get them to call 911. If you remain calm it will have a helpful affect on your caller. Do what you can in situations like this. Under no circumstances should you give medical advice. If the caller has taken an overdose, time may be very short. If the caller isn't able to call 911, then see if you can get their address so you can call 911 for them. Hang up and turn it over to 911. You've done all you can.

Relatives and Friends

Addiction is a disease that affects the whole family or environment where a using addict lives. Therefore, many calls come from family or friends of addicts. Narcotics Anonymous does not deal with these problems. However, by listing ourselves in the telephone directory, we invite calls from the public. We ought to treat callers kindly and talk to anyone who reaches out for help. Families and friends of addicts often feel isolated and ashamed, so it is important to take a little time with these people because they may be reaching out for the first time. They need and deserve encouragement. The people we are talking about are in direct contact with the addict and are affected by their addiction. These callers should be briefly informed about Narcotics Anonymous.

When a family member or friend calls trying to get help for their loved one, you should try to encourage the addict to call us or to get on the phone. If the addict is ready for help, we can direct them to a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous. We can offer some options for the family members also by referring them to an appropriate 12 step group or local agency. (Please refer to Appendix A – Local Resources at the back of this packet.)

Under the Influence / Harassment

If it is obvious that the caller is under the influence of a substance, please remember to remain calm and continually bring the conversation back to how the caller can get to a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. You should always end the call before the situation escalates. As a volunteer, you are not expected to endure any type of harassment from a caller. You may, at any time, simply terminate the call. Be sure to record this type of call on your Phonenumber call log.

Twelfth Step Calls

When our predecessors began working with other addicts, a twelfth step call could mean anything from going to a hospital to speak with a suffering addict to driving a newcomer to a meeting. Today, there is not such a clear definition of this responsibility, and the safety of addicts is of the utmost concern due to the likelihood of being exposed to drugs and addicts under the influence. Therefore, the Portland Area Public Relations subcommittee has a group of volunteers who meet the criteria for performing this type of service. These twelfth step volunteers are NA members that are available to speak with callers at length about the NA program and share their experience, strength, and hope. We carry NA's message through twelfth step calls; this kind of service gives each member an opportunity to make the newcomer feel welcomed.

Note: If the call is received after 11 pm or before 8 am, provide reasonable support, then let the caller know that someone will call them back in the morning, if needed. You may call a 12th Step volunteer with the addict's name and phone number after 8 am.

Rides to meetings: In our area, we do not necessarily provide rides to meetings. We have an excellent public transportation system in the Portland metropolitan area. As a Phoneline volunteer, you are encouraged to provide Tri-met information or directions as needed. If, for any reason, the caller insists that they need transportation to a meeting, obtain their name and phone number and then contact a 12th step volunteer who will make the determination of whether a ride can be provided.

As a Phoneline volunteer, you are expected to spend some time with an addict who needs to talk. This is often the case on late evening or overnight shifts. However, it may be more appropriate for the person to talk with a 12th step volunteer. This is where you are required to use common sense and sound judgment.

Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Do spend some time with the addict, listening closely and offering information about NA and our fellowship.
- Do get their name and phone number so that you can call back if you have to disconnect due to an incoming call or need to refer them to a 12th step volunteer.
- Do keep your conversation professional, compassionate, and appropriate.
- Ask direct questions
- Keep calls brief
- Try to be kind, courteous, and helpful
- Remain calm
- Respect anonymity
- Follow the Twelve Traditions

Don't

- Don't argue with people whose views of addiction or recovery differ from NA's
- Don't try to persuade the caller to stop using if the caller does not want to stop
- Don't allow the caller to tie up the Phonenumber so that you are unable to answer incoming calls.
- Don't mistake a crisis call with a 12th step call. A crisis call requires immediate action, such as calling 911 or the suicide hotline.
- Don't try to handle any calls that you are not qualified to handle
- Don't use jargon, such as "it works when you work it," "home group," "get a sponsor"
- Don't use foul language
- Don't give medical advice
- Don't give rides to meetings, refer to The Twelfth Step List of volunteers

NOTES