

## Information about NA

*Narcotics Anonymous is an international, community-based association of recovering drug addicts with more than 43,900 weekly meetings in over 127 countries worldwide.*

### Development

Narcotics Anonymous sprang from the Alcoholics Anonymous Program of the late 1940s, with meetings first emerging in the Los Angeles area of California, USA, in the early Fifties. The NA program started as a small US movement that has grown into one of the world's oldest and largest organizations of its type.

For many years, NA grew very slowly, spreading from Los Angeles to other major North American cities and Australia in the early 1970s. In 1983, Narcotics Anonymous published its self-titled Basic Text book, which contributed to tremendous growth. Within a few years, groups had formed in Brazil, Colombia, Germany, India, the Irish Republic, Japan, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom.

Today, Narcotics Anonymous is well established throughout much of the Americas, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Newly formed groups and NA communities are now scattered throughout the Indian subcontinent, Africa, East Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. Narcotics Anonymous books and information pamphlets are currently available in 34 languages, with translations in process for 16 languages.

### Program

NA's earliest self-titled pamphlet, known among members as "the White Booklet," describes Narcotics Anonymous this way:

*"NA is a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We ... meet regularly to help each other stay clean. ... We are not interested in what or how much you used ... but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help."*

Membership is open to all drug addicts, regardless of the particular drug or combination of drugs used. When adapting AA's First Step, the word "addiction" was substituted for "alcohol," thus removing drug-specific language and reflecting the "disease concept" of addiction.

There is no social, religious, economic, racial, ethnic, national, gender, or class-status membership restrictions. There are no dues or fees for membership; while most members regularly contribute small sums to help cover the expenses of meetings, such contributions are not mandatory.

Narcotics Anonymous provides a recovery process and support network inextricably linked together. One of the keys to NA's success is the therapeutic value of addicts working with other addicts. Members share their successes and challenges in overcoming active addiction and living drug-free productive lives through the application of the principles contained within the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of NA. These principles are the core of the Narcotics Anonymous recovery program. Principles incorporated within the steps include:

- admitting there is a problem;
- seeking help;
- engaging in a thorough self-examination;
- confidential self-disclosure;

- making amends for harm done; and
- helping other drug addicts who want to recover.

Central to the Narcotics Anonymous program is its emphasis on practicing spiritual principles. Narcotics Anonymous itself is non-religious, and each member is encouraged to cultivate an individual understanding—religious or not—of this “spiritual awakening.”

Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with other organizations, including other twelve step programs, treatment centers, or correctional facilities. As an organization, NA does not employ professional counselors or therapists nor does it provide residential facilities or clinics. Additionally, the fellowship does not provide vocational, legal, financial, psychiatric, or medical services. NA has only one mission: to provide an environment in which addicts can help one another stop using drugs and find a new way to live.

In Narcotics Anonymous, members are encouraged to comply with complete abstinence from all drugs including alcohol. It has been the experience of NA members that complete and continuous abstinence provides the best foundation for recovery and personal growth. NA as a whole has no opinion on outside issues, including prescribed medications. Use of psychiatric medication and other medically indicated drugs prescribed by a physician and taken under medical supervision is not seen as compromising a person’s recovery in NA.

## Service organization

The primary service provided by Narcotics Anonymous is the NA group meeting. Each group runs itself based on principles common to the entire organization, which is spelled out in NA’s literature.

Most groups rent space for their weekly meetings in buildings run by public, religious, or civic organizations. Individual members lead the NA meetings while other members take part by sharing in turn about their experiences in recovering from drug addiction. Group members also share the activities associated with running a meeting.

In a country where Narcotics Anonymous is a relatively new phenomenon, the NA group is the only level of organization. In places where a number of Narcotics Anonymous groups have had the chance to develop and stabilize, groups will have elected delegates to form a local service committee. These local committees usually offer a number of services. Included among them are:

- distribution of NA literature;
- telephone information services;
- presentations for treatment staff, civic organizations, government agencies, and schools;
- presentations to acquaint treatment or correctional facility residents with the NA program; and
- meeting directories for individual information and use in scheduling visits by client groups.

In some countries, especially the larger countries or those where Narcotics Anonymous is well established, a number of local/area committees have come together to create regional committees. These regional committees handle services within their larger geographical boundaries while the local/area committees handle local services.

An international delegate assembly known as the World Service Conference provides guidance on issues affecting the entire organization. Primary among the priorities of NA’s world services are activities that support young national movements and the translation of Narcotics Anonymous literature. For additional information, contact the World Service Office

headquarters in Los Angeles, California. The mailing address, telephone number, fax number, and website address appear at the end of this pamphlet.

## **Positions on related issues or institutions**

In order to maintain its focus, Narcotics Anonymous has established a tradition of non-endorsement and does not take positions on anything outside its own specific sphere of activity. Narcotics Anonymous does not express opinions—either pro or con—on civil, social, medical, legal, or religious issues. Additionally, it does not take stands on addiction-related issues such as criminality, law enforcement, drug legalization or penalties, prostitution, HIV/HCV infection, or syringe programs.

Narcotics Anonymous is entirely self-supporting and does not accept financial contributions from non-members. Based on the same principle, groups and service committees are run by NA members, for members.

Narcotics Anonymous neither endorses nor opposes any other organization's philosophy or methodology. Its primary competence is in providing a platform upon which drug addicts can share their recovery and experiences with one another. This is not to say that Narcotics Anonymous believes there are not any other "good" or "worthy" organizations. To remain free of the distraction of controversy, NA focuses all of its energy on its particular area of purpose, leaving other organizations to fulfill their own goals.

## **Cooperating with Narcotics Anonymous**

Although certain traditions guide its relations with other organizations, Narcotics Anonymous welcomes the cooperation of those in government, the clergy, the helping professions, and private voluntary organizations. NA's nonaddict friends have been instrumental in getting Narcotics Anonymous started in many countries and helping NA grow.

NA strives to cooperate with others interested in Narcotics Anonymous by providing contact information, literature, and information about recovery through the NA Fellowship. Additionally, NA members are often available to make panel presentations in treatment centers and correctional facilities, sharing the NA program with addicts otherwise unable to attend community-based meetings.

## **Membership demographics**

To offer some general informal observations about the nature of the membership and the effectiveness of the program the following observations are believed to be reasonably accurate.

The socioeconomic strata represented by the NA membership vary from country to country. Members of one particular social or economic class start most national NA movements, but as their outreach activities become more effective, the membership becomes more broadly representative of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

All ethnic and religious backgrounds are represented among NA members. Once a national movement reaches a certain level of maturity, its membership generally reflects the diversity or homogeneity of the background culture.

Membership in Narcotics Anonymous is voluntary; no attendance records are kept either for NA's own purposes or for others. Because of this, it is sometimes difficult to provide interested parties with comprehensive information about NA membership. There are, however, some objective measures that can be shared based on data obtained from members attending one of our world conventions; the diversity of our membership,

especially ethnic background, seems to be representative of the geographic location of the survey. The following demographic information was revealed in a survey returned by almost half of the 13,000 attendees at the 2003 NA World Convention held in San Diego, California:

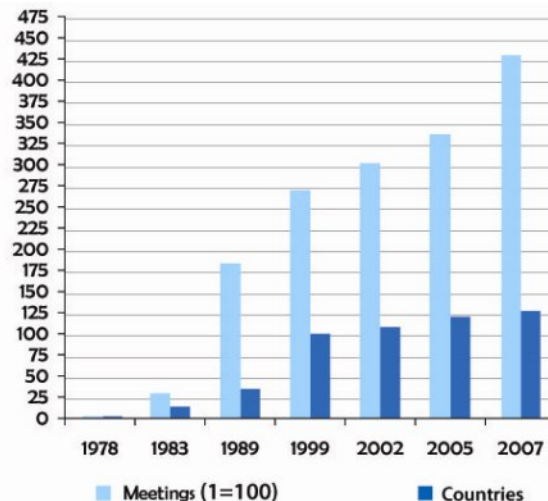
- Gender: 55% male, 45% female.
- Age: 3% 20 years old and under, 12% 21–30 years old, 31% 31–40 years old, 40% 41–50 years old, 13% over age 51, and 1% did not answer.
- Ethnicity: 70% Caucasian, 11% African-American, 11% Hispanic, and 8% other.
- Employment status: 72% employed full-time, 9% employed part-time, 7% unemployed, 3% retired, 3% homemakers, 5% students, and 1% did not answer.
- Continuous abstinence/recovery: ranged from less than one year up to 40 years, with a mean average of 7.4 years.

## Rate of growth

Because no attendance records are kept, it is impossible to estimate what percentages of those who come to Narcotics Anonymous remain active in NA over time. The only sure indicator of the program's success is the rapid growth in the number of registered Narcotics Anonymous meetings in recent decades and the rapid spread of Narcotics Anonymous outside North America.

- In 1978, there were fewer than 200 registered groups in three countries.
- In 1983, more than a dozen countries had 2,966 meetings.
- In 1993, 60 countries had over 13,000 groups holding over 19,000 meetings.
- In 2002, 108 countries had 20,000 groups holding over 30,000 meetings.
- In 2005, 116 countries had over 21,500 groups holding over 33,500 weekly meetings.
- In 2007, there are over 25,065 groups holding over 43,900 weekly meetings in 127 countries.

## Growth of NA



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