



# How to Conduct Public Information Service Work At The Area Level

Presented By: Heroin Anonymous World Conference

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# Table Of Contents

<u>Preface.....</u>	<u>Page 3</u>
<u>What Is Public Information.....</u>	<u>Page</u> <u>4</u>
<u>Forming A Committee.....</u>	<u>Page</u> <u>5</u>
<u>The Twelve Traditions Of Heroin Anonymous.....</u>	<u>Page</u> <u>6</u>
<u>The H.A. Traditions.....</u>	<u>Page</u> <u>7</u>
<u>Starting A Hotline.....</u>	<u>Page 8</u>
<u>Working With The Media.....</u>	<u>Page</u> <u>14</u>
<u>Working With Professionals.....</u>	<u>Page</u> <u>19</u>
<u>Attending Non-H.A. events.....</u>	<u>Page</u> <u>21</u>

# Preface

## **What is the purpose of this handbook?**

This handbook is intended to be a reference for future Area Level Public Information Committees. The information in this handbook is the result of the efforts from the 2016 and 2017 Public Information Committee from the Arizona Area of Heroin Anonymous. The Public Information movement in Heroin Anonymous is in its infancy, and the committee that formed the contents of this book know only a fraction of what is possible when carrying the message through various platforms.

In this handbook, you will find suggestions and resources such as: service positions with their respective descriptions, various letter templates, experience based suggestions for many activities that are common-place in Public Information service work. All of the contents of this handbook will not be released until approved by trusted servants from the Heroin Anonymous World Conference, so that the message carried in this manual may be one influenced by a power greater than ourselves, as expressed by a group conscience.

We hope that the information carried in the following pages prove to be beneficial to your committee's future endeavours. **Please direct any questions to the PI Committee, hawspichair@gmail.com**

Heroin Anonymous Public Information

**“On the anvils of experience, the structure of our Society was hammered out.”<sup>1</sup>**

## **What Is Public Information?**

The efforts of any Public Information Committee can be best summarized as taking actions to increase the general population's awareness and accessibility of Heroin Anonymous. Although there are many ways to carry the message through public service work, the three mediums we will be focusing on are:

### **Word Of Mouth**

Many members of Heroin Anonymous are already doing Public Information service work unknowingly. Most members, excited about a life void of dope and filled with hope, have told our relatives and friends about the marvel that is Heroin Anonymous. As a part of a Public Information Committee many members will end up acquainted with the office's of local media representatives, doctors and city officials, and we are careful to speak only about Heroin Anonymous rather than the opinions we may have about outside issues.

### **Writing Letters**

Many of our contacts, professional or media, began with a brief, humble letter of introduction. The age of “snail-mail” may soon be a thing of the past; however, many individuals still rely heavily on email communications. The

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<sup>1</sup> *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. New York, NY: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1989. Print.

templates and examples for many of our letters will be included in the handbook under their respective sections. These letters will often be accompanied by other items such as: Heroin Anonymous approved literature, business cards, and meeting directories.

## **Multimedia Communications**

Public Information is an exciting avenue for the Heroin Addict with a creative side that is eager to give back. Audio and/or video entertainment is created as a manner of attracting new prospective members to our fellowship for the first time. In conjunction with these efforts, members may also distribute and display, with consent, various posters and flyers containing enough information to locate a meeting.

## **Forming A Committee**

The various tasks that are involved in a Public Information Committee's running operations are rarely the role of one member. Each member of the Committee is encouraged to reach out for assistance from other addicts, committee members, and even allies of recovery. It is suggested to elect or appoint a main point of contact for each operation.

### **Public Service Announcement Committee**

This group is responsible for creating the multimedia content that will be used for Public Information outreach.

### **Media Correspondence Committee**

This group finds and maintains connections with media personnel.

### **Professional Community Committee**

This group organizes with professionals and city officials to identify new and creative way to cooperate together.

### **Helpline Committee**

This group will start and manage a phone line for those in need to call.

### **Panels Committee**

This group attends non-H.A. events and represents Heroin Anonymous.

### **Fundraising Committee**

This group hosts events to abate part of the committees expenses.

### **Directories Committee**

This group creates, maintains, and makes accessible a list of the state's active meetings.

## **THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF HEROIN ANONYMOUS**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon H.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop suffering from heroin addiction.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or H.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the addict who still suffers.
6. A H.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the H.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every H.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Heroin Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. H.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Heroin Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the H.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, television and films.

12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The Twelve Traditions are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Traditions does not mean AA is affiliated with this program. AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism. Use of the Traditions in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after AA, but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise.<sup>2</sup>

## **The H.A. Traditions**

When doing Public Information, it is the principle of cooperation but not affiliation with outside organizations and programs (Traditions 6 & 7). Also, we keep in mind that we have no opinions on outside issues or anything else outside of the Heroin Anonymous program of recovery (Tradition 10). As members of our Fellowship, we have the responsibility to maintain our principles by learning the Traditions, adhering to them, and living them in our daily lives.

Following the principle of the 11th Tradition we seek to educate and share a message of recovery to the general public and the addict who still suffers.

### **The 11th Tradition states:**

“Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, television and films.”

### **Anonymity**

Many of us have broken our own personal anonymity to individuals of our own choosing. Going outside the Fellowship to the press, radio, television or films is stepping over the boundaries of grandeur to grandiosity.

Personal recognition can only be harmful when you bring your sobriety into the public's

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<sup>2</sup> THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: 1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity. 2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern. 3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking. 4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole. 5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. 6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose. 7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. 8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers. 9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve. 10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy. 11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films. 12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

eye as a member of H.A.

### **Media Interview Policies**

While doing an on-camera interview as a member of H.A., you can be shadowed, have your face scrambled electronically, or have your back to the camera. As a recovering addict, you can do a full camera shot and mention your full name as long as you do not mention H.A. in your interview. That includes mentioning going to a H.A. meeting.

If you are going to allow the media into your meeting, (via a group conscience), or if you, as a member of H.A., consent to an interview, please have each member of the media sign a Statement of Anonymity (see Protection of Anonymity Agreement on page 17). While this doesn't absolutely safeguard the Fellowship, it certainly makes members of the media more aware.

## **Starting A Hotline**

Here are some of the main points and functions of a successful HA Hotline:

An HA Hotline is a mode by which new members can find our fellowship. That is the primary objective. The availability of an HA Hotline can be the link between suffering addicts who are looking for a solution and finding the help they need.

The first thing to do in order to start a hotline is to contact a call-forwarding company. There are several different types of call-forwarding systems. Some require you to have physical hardware or a constant internet source for the line to function, and others are accessed remotely and do not require either of these. Depending on the size of your HA Area fellowship and financial availability, you may want to consider using a single phone for the calls to be forwarded to and have volunteers keep the phone for an allotted amount of time before passing it off to another volunteer. This requires a high level of responsibility for the member keeping the phone. It is not a bad option, however, if your local fellowship is small and the volume of your calls is low. For a bigger fellowship, a means of dividing the responsibility is probably more effective. Contact call-forwarding companies to investigate your options. You can have volunteers



that are assigned to shifts of different lengths and can even have multiple volunteers assigned to answer calls at the same time.

Once you have chosen a system, it is important to compile a guidelines packet that outlines the responsibilities of your hotline volunteers. There is a sample of a guidelines packet following these suggestions. (\*\*\*) Please note that this sample is tailored to a specific phone system and not all of the guidelines may apply to your approach).

Once you have established the guidelines for your volunteers, outreach is necessary to create a base of hotline volunteers. A hotline training event can be a useful way to get people involved. All of the hotline volunteers must be trained in the chosen manner of your Area's standards. Referring to the guidelines sample below will provide you with a solid understanding of the functions and protocol of a successful hotline. It is crucial that volunteers are committed to this important task. An answered call may make the difference between a suffering addict finding our fellowship and remaining without a solution. Inappropriate behavior by a hotline volunteer can be incredibly harmful as well. Ongoing maintenance of your volunteer list is necessary. Ensure that all of your volunteers are up-to-date on your procedures and have everything they need fill their role with the hotline. You will need a list of 12-Step volunteers that can return the calls of people who need someone to talk to or need help getting to a meeting. It is wise to utilize 12-step volunteers because they will have more ability to make specific suggestions to the caller. Remember that volunteers who answer the hotline are representing HA and cannot violate traditions while doing so. Your hotline answering volunteers will need a 12-Step volunteers list, an updated meeting list with all of the meetings in your Area, and a copy of the guidelines packet.

Allow enough time to be positive that your phone system is functioning properly before adding volunteers to your call-forwarding system. There can be unforeseen bugs in the system that may result in lost calls. Be sure that the line is working correctly by making regular test-calls and staying in close contact with your call-forwarding company.

Form a committee that is dedicated to the success of your new HA Hotline. This is important work and can take significant effort to accomplish. A Hotline chair, outreach chair, Area/Intergroup liaison, and phone-system coordinator are some of the roles to consider for your Hotline Committee.

### **HEROIN ANONYMOUS HOTLINE GUIDELINES**

Thank you for volunteering your time to help the addict who still suffers. Our major objective is to get the newcomer to an H.A. meeting and/or connect them to a 12-step volunteer that can assist them further. For that reason, the provided meeting and 12-step volunteer lists are your greatest tools. This is a vital part of the H.A. program; your assistance may save a life. Remember that heroin is illegal, and we must protect ourselves, which is why **WE STRONGLY ADVISE AGAINST MEETING PEOPLE AT THEIR RESIDENCES**. We also strongly suggest that **NO ONE MAKE A 12 STEP CALL ALONE!** It is important to keep in mind that we are not professional therapists. We encourage you to share your experience, strength and hope as the situation dictates, as well as the times, locations, and general information on H.A. meeting procedures. Please read the short chapter "Working with Others" in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. It will help immensely. Volunteers have found that taking part in this important area of service is surprisingly rewarding.

- Begin the call by answering "Hello, \_\_\_\_\_ Area of Heroin Anonymous, how may I help you?" Then ask the caller what city they are in and help them find a meeting near them.
  - Use the provided comprehensive meeting list organized by city.

- If a caller requires more than just information on meeting times, locations, and general procedures, ask them if it is ok for you to take down their number and have a 12-step volunteer call them back. You may choose to assist the caller in a 12-step capacity, but always do so using your personal phone number. You will be provided a list of HA 12-step volunteers in each of the major cities in the H.A. \_\_\_\_\_ Area.
- The sole purpose of the H.A. \_\_\_\_\_ Area Hotline is to carry the message of Heroin Anonymous and to the addict who still suffers.
- On calls received of a business nature take a message, name, organization, telephone number and desired information and pass the message to the H.A. Area Public Information Chairperson.

## **HEROIN ANONYMOUS' HOTLINE DO'S AND DON'TS**

### **DO'S**

1. DO- Use discretion if a caller requires more than directions/information relating to a meeting. In this case, ask the caller if you can take down their number and call them back directly.
  1. *This is the same process used when referring a caller to a 12-step volunteer but does not need to be used unless the caller seems to need more than 3 minutes on the line.*
2. DO- Remember you are representing Heroin Anonymous. Avoid profane, racist, biased, or abusive language of any kind.
3. DO- Share your experience, strength, and hope using common simple wording.

4. DO- Connect the caller with a 12-step volunteer if needed. You can choose to assist the caller in a 12-step capacity if you wish, but must contact the caller using your personal phone number.
  1. Remember: many 12 step calls can be done over the phone, but our 12-step volunteers may meet a caller in person if they feel it is necessary.
5. DO- Use the dial code \*67 prior to dialing the caller's phone number to protect anonymity.
  1. This will block your number from appearing on the caller's phone.
  2. Always ask the caller if they can receive unknown or blocked calls on their phone before using this process.
    1. In this case, refer the caller to a 12-step volunteer, as 12-step volunteers do not necessarily have to use this process.
6. DO- If physical abuse is an issue, refer the caller to the proper authorities and local community referral services.
7. DO- Refer calls for Public Information, i.e. requests for speakers, new meetings, radio, T.V. or literature to the H.A. Public Information Chairperson.
8. DO- Keep your conversation short and explain that you must keep the line open to help others.
9. DO- Suggest that the caller arrives ten minutes early for the meeting and to let someone there know it's their first meeting.
10. DO- If a situation arises that you are not sure how to handle, take the caller's name and number then contact the Hotline Chairperson, or your sponsor.
11. DO- Advise callers to call 911 if there is an emergency.

12. DO- Ask them if they access to the internet: <http://heroinanonymous.org>  
OR Google big book

## **DON'TS**

1. DON'T- (if you are using a cell phone) a) Turn off your phone b) choose to ignore a call!
2. DON'T – Stay on the line, call the person back!
3. DON'T- Recommend a specific treatment center or half way house.
  1. Refer the caller to the Community Information and Referral Service.
4. DON'T- Give medical, psychiatric, or behavioral health advice.
5. DON'T - Advise specific action for domestic difficulties (e.g., “I'd kick the bum out.”).
  1. Use the Community Information and Referral Service, which will direct them to professional counseling.

6. DON'T- Give out anyone's last name or phone number from the 12-step volunteer lists.
  1. Always protect the anonymity of H.A. members.
7. DON'T- Accept personal messages for another addict or give out any phone numbers.
8. DON'T- Tell callers they will be met at their homes.
  1. Let the H.A. member making the call arrange a safe meeting place.
9. DON'T- Send yourself or someone else on a 12 STEP CALL ALONE!!
10. DON'T- Take a 12 STEP CALL yourself because you think it might lead to a "romantic encounter." Let's be sure not to do that.

## **Working With The Media**

Working with the media is an important part of Public Information service work. Our faith in the 12 steps helps us maintain freedom from Heroin Addiction, and this same belief allows us to carry the message of Heroin Anonymous with conviction. The initial goal of connecting with media personnel is to inform our contacts of their unique opportunity to serve the public; this service appears in the nature of publications that make the presence of Heroin Anonymous known.

Once consent to cooperate has been secured, a trusted servant should send the anonymity acknowledgment and agreement documents (shown later in this section). Informing our press connections of the importance of anonymity is paramount to the sanctity of the fellowship. When the media personnel signs and returns the form, save a copy to be kept on record, and we can now begin working with the media representative to develop a press release.

Editors want it straight, concise and to the point. Remember the five W's and the H: Does your press release answer the questions

Who, What, When, Where, Why and How?

Give them no-nonsense releases. Skip the quotes, remember the benefits, keep packages small and dress up your release with headlines, bullets and subheads. Also search for typos and other errors. Of course, don't forget to include a name and phone number to contact for more information. To sum it up:

Remember the five W's and the H

- Make it sharp
- Write to inform, not entertain
- Keep it honest and simple
- Include a contact name and number
- Be clear and visual
- Be focused and concise

After the information in your release or article is printed or aired, be sure to send a thank you note or letter. Be sure to keep a copy of the release for the PI files.

**Introduction Letter:** a suggested format for a letter to make initial contact with various media personnel.



Dear (Correspondent's Name),

As a trusted servant of the XXX Area's Public Information Committee of Heroin Anonymous and as a person who has been through the struggles of substance use disorder, I understand the traumatic misfortunes that happen to families, friends, and ourselves due to heroin. I would like to acquaint you with our program, so that you may better understand heroin addicts and help direct them towards a possible means of recovery from the growing problem of heroin.

Heroin Anonymous (HA) is an all-inclusive fellowship of people who have found a better way of life, free from heroin addiction. Our fellowship is based on a twelve-step program of recovery—and if you wish to join us, we are here to share what we have found. There are no dues or fees for membership; the only requirement is a desire to stay sober. We are here to assist the next person seeking help with their own addiction.

Heroin Anonymous is focused on the recovery and maintenance of heroin addicts who come to our fellowship looking to recover from their struggles with heroin. The Fellowship of Heroin Anonymous does not have, share, affiliate with, or endorse opinions on any outside issues. We are by no means affiliated with any outside organizations, however, there is a relationship of cooperation when dealing with problems of heroin addiction.

Heroin Anonymous accepts anyone struggling with heroin addiction regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual preference, location, income, or background.

If you would like to know what it is that you can do to help this rapidly growing problem, please, contact me via the phone number or email address located in the signature. Thank you for your support and allowing us be of service.

Sincerely,

XXX

Public Service Announcement and Media Chair

Public Information Committee XXX Area Heroin Anonymous

[publicinfo@haazarea.org](mailto:publicinfo@haazarea.org)

**Statement of Anonymity:** this is an example of a letter that details the importance of adhering to the 11th Tradition.





### **Public Information Statement of Anonymity**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**To:** Editors, Journalists, and Media Professionals

**From:** Heroin Anonymous Public Information Committee

**Subject:** Anonymity

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*The coverage of any event where anonymity is required can prove to be a difficult task, especially since the visual aspect always makes a feature more interesting. Here are a few tips on how we can work together.*

The most important tradition of our organization is anonymity. Traditionally H.A. members have always taken care to preserve their anonymity at the public level of press, radio, TV, and film. We ask for your invaluable assistance to preserve the anonymity of our recovering addicts by not identifying them as members of Heroin Anonymous, using their names, or full-face photographs in any facet of the media.

We know from the experience that many people with heroin problems might hesitate to turn to H.A. for help if they thought their problem might be discussed publicly, even inadvertently, by others. Newcomers should be able to seek help with complete assurance that their identities will not be disclosed to anyone outside the Fellowship.


A H.A. member may, for various reasons, "break anonymity" deliberately at the public level. Since that is a matter of individual choice and conscience, the Fellowship as a whole has no control over such deviations from tradition. It is clear, however, that they do not have the approval of the overwhelming majority of our membership.

We earnestly request those gathered here to honor the tradition of anonymity. We request that no record be made of this presentation, either by photography, moving or still, or by videotape. If you should happen to recognize someone who identifies themselves as an addict, please keep that knowledge strictly to yourself.

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MQXP9rDinJdr6H1-\\_AgQWQ\\_ve1KvGATH6iuEZAUOSpA/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MQXP9rDinJdr6H1-_AgQWQ_ve1KvGATH6iuEZAUOSpA/edit?usp=sharing)

**Anonymity Agreement:** This letter is intended to be signed in the case of an interview, so that we have evidence that the media interaction will adhere to the

11th tradition.



**Protection of Anonymity Agreement**

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree not to disclose the last name, place of employment, or city of residence of any person being interviewed as a member of Heroin Anonymous. I further agree not to use full-face photography or any type of photography that will expose that person's identity.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/11j2mykvMSK7J5AHJnXwjuHPKsOGhNEm8LfYX3tfBACA/edit?usp=sharing>

**Event Invitation:** This letter has been included in the case that your Area hosts an event that will be open to press involvement.



To Whom It May Concern,

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1N8sqHSBX2SIzUHJEzfAjHOaH1u9ZKg\\_8H-q8n7nS-u4/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1N8sqHSBX2SIzUHJEzfAjHOaH1u9ZKg_8H-q8n7nS-u4/edit?usp=sharing)

## **Working With Professionals**

With this position, there is a responsibility to maintain a level of professionalism when dealing with public figures and media outlets. We are always a representation of our fellowship wherever we go, but this may be the only opportunity someone like a police chief or journalist has to meet with sober members of our groups. Some things to keep in mind are protecting anonymity, not taking a political stance regardless of your personal beliefs, being clear on what H.A. is able to do for them as well as our limitations, and these people are not in our fellowship, so the use war stories about our using days may not be an effective approach.

Below is a sample letter that was sent out to various Mayors, Congressmen/Congresswomen, Senators and the Governor. While the letter is a good jumping off point, the effectiveness really lies in the persistence and follow through. Another thing to keep in mind is to be prepared when you do get a meeting. Have talking points, ideas on how H.A. can help their community, recent statistics both positive and negative and experience of how we have worked with other communities in the past. Sharing some of your own experience is important, but don't focus on yourself too much, instead on how the fellowship is prepared to help their problem.

## **Professional Community Introduction Letter**



Dear (contact's name),

My name is (name) and I am a member of the 12 step program Heroin Anonymous here in the valley. I am the elected member of our fellowship in XXX to spearhead Public Information in regards to speaking with the professional community on behalf of Heroin Anonymous. I would very much appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to discuss the ongoing opioid epidemic. Our program offers opiate users a way out of their suffering as well as a platform for continued abstinence from heroin and all other mind altering substances. I myself have (fill in) years sober from all substances and can credit my involvement with the Heroin Anonymous fellowship as the main reason for my success.

Heroin Anonymous was founded in Phoenix, Arizona XX years ago and has blossomed to XX states as well as groups in Canada, South Africa, England and Germany. It would be unprecedented to have the backing of a governorship to help propel our fellowship into the spotlight of discussion regarding this epidemic. If the rise of opioids in our community is a real concern to your administration I strongly urge you to reach out to myself and schedule a meeting. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your time and concern.

(your name)  
Heroin Anonymous XXX Area Public Information  
xxx@xxx.xxx

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Dc7YYMZWfV-SF53xI-2VbNFLy6Tyc7a7-x\\_jq5gxXcE/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Dc7YYMZWfV-SF53xI-2VbNFLy6Tyc7a7-x_jq5gxXcE/edit?usp=sharing)

## **Attending Non-HA Events**

The 12 steps do not have a monopoly on recovery in today's day and age. Eventually, the opportunity will arise for Heroin Anonymous to be invited to events that are a congregation for individuals from various pathways of recovery. A working knowledge of the 12 Traditions is invaluable in this position. Our primary purpose is to spread awareness of the presence of Heroin Anonymous.

Common Activities Include:

- Distributing pamphlets
- Answering questions about the fellowship
- Collaboration with the H&I (Hospitals & Institutions) committee to start meetings at interested facilities
- Showing the recovery community that Heroin Anonymous worked for you!