



How to Conduct Public Information Service Work At The Area Level

Presented By: Heroin Anonymous World Conference
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Preface

What is the purpose of this handbook?

This handbook is intended to be a reference for future Area, District, and Group Level Public Information Committees. The information in this handbook is the result of the efforts from previous H.A. World Conferences and the H.A.W.S Public Information Conference Committee. This Handbook was first created in 2018, and the original contents of this handbook contained materials put together by the H.A. Arizona Area P.I. Committee. 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.”¹

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

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.

H.A. World Service Conference Public Information Committee

What we do on the H.A.W.S.C. Public Information Committee is produce, provide, and present materials & resources for communicating with the public to the Conference floor for approval by the Fellowship. We freely offer our experience and assistance to other H.A. groups who would like help with their own P.I. efforts and try to stay in touch with them. Our committee is made up of various Chair positions, Delegates, and members at large. Any member of H.A. is welcome to join our committee, and can contact us at HAWSPIChair@gmail.com

“The Public Information Conference Committee develops, initiates, and plans the means of communication to the public, which is presented to the Conference for Fellowship approval.”

-Statement of Purpose from the H.A. World Service Manual

Heroin Anonymous Area/District/Group P.I. Committees

The Public Information committee communicates clear and accurate information about our program to the general public, and progressively makes that information more available for those who seek it out. This makes the H.A. message of recovery more accessible to the heroin addict who still suffers, vitally contributing to our fellowship's primary purpose. We do this in a variety of ways, always guided by group conscious and the 12 traditions of Heroin Anonymous.

Although there are many ways to carry the message through public information 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 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 ways 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, 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.²

² 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.

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, 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 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.

Attraction Versus Promotion

Tradition Eleven states:

“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.”

In our meetings the most important person is the one who is not there; the one who is still sick and suffering. Our fellowship and sobriety depend on reaching out to those who have not yet made it into these rooms. Very few members of Heroin Anonymous have randomly stumbled upon a meeting without being given some piece of information that guides them into the rooms. Getting this information to those heroin addicts who still suffer, whilst avoiding damage to Heroin Anonymous or individual members lies at the center of Attraction versus Promotion.

How do we attract new members to Heroin Anonymous?

Making our message available for newcomers to find is different than actively promoting our program of recovery. Attraction, in our case, is placing information related to our fellowship and program in a position that a suffering heroin addict can find it. Such pieces of information may be, but are not limited to: web pages, flyers, booklets, social media posts, speakers, panels, information booths, posters, stickers, signs, audio and video presentations, clothing with HA related printings and meeting lists. These pieces of information may be placed in or sent to, though not limited to: medical facilities, libraries, schools, jails/penitentiaries, rehabs, churches, courts, businesses, town halls and news organizations. We always ask for permission before displaying/leaving our information within any of these places.

How do we avoid promoting Heroin Anonymous when carrying our message?

To understand how to make something attractive rather than promotional we must look at what promotion is. Promotion, as it pertains to these pieces of information, puts forward a promise of results; a statement or guarantee that cannot always be delivered on. While inspiring stories of miraculous recovery from heroin addiction do occur in HA, promising these results to the public, or to heroin addicts, can do great damage to our reputation. We must not proclaim the greatness of our program in public, no matter how strongly we feel. Our public information shall not claim: that we have a cure for heroin addiction, that our program is better than another program of recovery, promises of wealth or wellbeing, enticing possible members with gifts monetary or otherwise, affiliation with any outside enterprise, grandiose claims, matters that break the anonymity of any member, figures that illustrate success rates, connection to any sort of religious or spiritual group, or state opinions on matters political or medical. In public we only state how Heroin Anonymous has improved our own lives, not how it can change the lives of others. Our material should be in the tone of an invitation, up for the reader to decide if they wish to accept.

Where does the HA member fit into this?

The most attractive thing we can do as members of Heroin Anonymous is to be beaming examples of what this program has given us. Carrying the program's spiritual principles into all aspects of our lives is paramount in this regard. Being a conscientious, caring, and productive member of society helps to create a situation where a sick and suffering heroin addict may inquire about how that person's life ended up this way. Publicly announcing prior heroin addiction and recovery there from, is not of concern to this fellowship and may be of great benefit to other heroin addicts. Announcing publicly membership to Heroin Anonymous on the other hand, may threaten the anonymity of other members and possibly cause harm to the fellowship. Matters related to Heroin Anonymous should be left to pieces of information that do not identify the member or anyone else within the program. If making a public presentation about Heroin Anonymous, keeping your last name and personal details secret are in the best

interest of our fellowship. If inquired about the program during a presentation, respond by stating along the lines of “I would be more than willing to discuss these matters in private after I conclude”. Protection of all of our anonymity helps ensure that our program is one that is attractive for generations to come.

Need more information or have any unique circumstances?

Please feel free to email any questions or concerns to: HAWSPICChair@gmail.com

Starting A 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 to 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.*
 - 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 have 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 halfway 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.

Twelve Point Social Media Guide for Heroin

Anonymous Public Information Efforts

Our goal with this document is to use the twelve traditions as a guide in our social media presence. While social media was certainly not a concept in the time that the traditions were written we feel the traditions are our best guidance here as they are in all our twelve step efforts.

- 1) Unity:** Do our social media efforts promote unity in our fellowship? If we feel or are receiving feedback that our actions in social media are causing discord, disunity or divisiveness in our fellowship we need to reevaluate our efforts and bring our decisions back to the group conscious.

- 2) Group conscious:** Once we get approval for our social media efforts from the Group, District, Area, or Region we must develop a way for God to express himself through some form of group conscious. Once approved we must form some type of public information committee to review, vote on, approve and take administrative responsibility over these social media efforts. In our experience we have seen several ways various groups have allowed group conscious to express itself in their social media efforts.
 - a)** Every group elects a PI chair that serves a committee headed by a district or area PI chair. This forms a voting PI committee. Each representative has been elected through group conscious.
 - b)** In smaller groups or areas, the PI chair hosts a PI committee where he or she invites and encourages members of the group or various groups to attend the PI committee. Through the right of participation each attending member forms a voting committee that the group conscious can be expressed through.
 - c)** Some areas use a combination of these two methods. So, groups, districts, and areas elect PI committee chairs. They then encourage participation from the body politic. Through right of participation all who attend have a vote to

express group conscious with the chair of the committee and its elected group representatives, serving the committee and fellowship as a whole.

3) With the only requirement for membership being the desire to stop suffering from heroin addiction, we feel we should attempt to reach out to all heroin addicts. So, we should think of how our social media efforts can reach all sectors of the heroin addict population in our community.

4) While each group or area's public information chair or public information committee operates autonomously of the other groups and areas, we must work to ensure our actions aren't negatively affecting other groups or Heroin Anonymous as a whole.

5) In our experience it's best to check all our actions in our social media with the thought, does this aid in our primary purpose of helping the still suffering heroin addict? If we feel we cannot answer this question with a firm yes then we should reevaluate our efforts. Our primary purpose is to help the still suffering heroin addict.

6) We should never endorse, finance, or lend the HA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose. We don't want to share, link, or refer people to other entities through our social media efforts. We have no control over what views and opinions they may express. We would hate to push away a suffering heroin addict or their loved ones because of perceived affiliations with other entities. We also don't want to give outside groups any power or control over our fellowship or message.

7) We want to ensure that we are fully self-supporting in our social media efforts. We want to decline outside contributions ensuring that we are in no way in debt to others. By supporting ourselves we protect ourselves from outside influences. We keep our message purely that of the message of Heroin Anonymous.

8) We may find that the members of our PI committees are not well versed in every form of social media that we may wish to use to spread information about Heroin Anonymous to the general public. If we have the needed funds, we can employ special workers to build our presence in the various forms of social media.

9) We sometimes find it helpful to form subcommittees whose sole focus is our social media presence and its effectiveness and tradition compliance.

10) We want to ensure in all our social media efforts that we have no opinion, for or against, any outside issues. When we begin to state opinions for the fellowship, oftentimes we lose our focus on our primary purpose. We may even push heroin addicts or their loved ones away from our fellowship and it's precious message that saved our lives. Also, none of us have the right to state an opinion that will be seen as the opinion of the entire fellowship.

11) We never want to attach any single member's name or group of member's names to our social media efforts. When we break personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, film, and social media we appoint ourselves as representatives of the fellowship. Then our failings and shortcomings become the failings and shortcomings that are associated with the fellowship. We have yet to meet the heroin addict who can accurately represent us all. While we want to keep our membership anonymous, we need to make a clear distinction between members in secret groups and followers. If a group has members, admins, and moderators we want to keep this list secret and out of the public eye. However, if we have pages or accounts that can be followed by anyone in the general public we need not be concerned. While we want to keep membership anonymous, we need to make a clear distinction between members in a secret group and followers of a page or account. If a group has members, admins, or moderators then we want to maintain personal anonymity and keep this list out of the public eye. However, if we have pages or accounts that can be followed by anyone in the general public we

need not be concerned. It does not break traditions to have an anonymously operated social media presence that is open to anyone in the general public to follow. This speaks to the very essence of our public information efforts.

12) While the twelfth tradition has many implications, our focus in social media efforts will be practicing our principles in all our social media affairs. We want to display how the fellowship of Heroin Anonymous is a fellowship of members practicing our guiding spiritual principles. With anonymity being the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, we must also remember that all the members of our guiding PI committees have equal authority and responsibility for our social media efforts. We are all humble servants of the same fellowship working towards the same goal of helping the still suffering heroin addict.

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 Public Information 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

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

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/1MOXP9rDinIldr6H1-AgQWQ_ve1KvGATH6iuEZ_AUOSpA/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,

My name is XXX and I am a member of the 12 step program Heroin Anonymous here in XXX. I am also an elected servant of our fellowship's Public Information Committee. Part of the committee's role is speaking with media professionals on behalf of the Heroin Anonymous fellowship in XXX. Our program offers opiate users a way out of their suffering as well as a platform for continued abstinence from heroin. I myself am clean and sober, and can credit my involvement with the Heroin Anonymous fellowship as the main reason for my success.

Heroin Anonymous was founded in Phoenix, Arizona X years ago and has blossomed to X states as well as groups in Canada, South Africa, England and Germany. While we have traditionally relied on a grassroots model for the expansion of our fellowship, the devastating effects of this epidemic have led us to new ideas and models for raising public awareness of H.A. We want to make sure that every citizen of this beautiful state knows of our community-based groups, so that those suffering from this public health crisis can find the help we offer.

As a part of that push to attract more of those in need, we are hosting the *(insert event name)* of Heroin Anonymous and we would like to extend our invitation to you as a member of the media.

Consider this an invitation to play a unique role in the fight against the opioid epidemic.

If the rise of opioids in our community is a real concern to your organization/publication, I strongly urge you to RSVP for this event by contacting me via the phone or email listed in my signature. If no one is available to represent your company at this event, I would still love to meet with you and discuss our fellowship. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your time and concern,

XXX.
Public Service Announcement and Media Chair
Heroin Anonymous XXX Area Public Information
xxx@xxx.xxx

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

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 of individuals from various pathways of recovery. A working knowledge of the 12 traditions is invaluable in this position. Our primary purpose in public information is to spread awareness of the presence of Heroin Anonymous.

We have found that carrying the message of recovery is best done with another recovering heroin addict, and so too is it that providing information about H.A. to the community should be done with another member of Heroin Anonymous. Periodically your area may be invited to participate in things such as opioid summits, health and wellness events, benefit run/walks, addiction/recovery awareness conventions, local community meetings, and other types of events and gatherings where H.A.s services can be of use to the community.

We do NOT provide

- **drug education**
- **therapy**
- **medical or psychiatric treatment**
- **chemical dependency treatment**
- **drug addiction research**
- **propaganda of any form**

Remember that what Heroin Anonymous has to offer the world is recovery through the 12 steps of H.A. and that we simply wish to offer what worked for us. It might be helpful to provide basic information about meetings, sponsorship, H&I work, steps, and traditions. Emphasize that we are an all inclusive community recovery resource with no dues or fees for membership, and that our primary purpose is to carry the message to the heroin addict who still suffers. H.A. is a spiritual, not religious, program.

Before attending community events, it is useful to prepare materials that will help in informing the public about H.A. including meeting lists, pamphlets, and any other pieces of informative Heroin Anonymous literature. Banners/signs can also attract interest to your booth/table. Talk to the facilitators to see what else you might need to provide, such as tables, chairs, or a tent. Talk to your other committee members to get a better understanding of what materials are practical for the type of event you are attending.

The public and professional community are sure to have an abundance of questions about H.A. and it is our responsibility as members to respond to them through the spirit of tradition. Our interactions with them may be the only time they ever meet a member of our fellowship, and we need to be reminded that when we are dealing with the public we become the face of H.A. whether we would like to be or not. For this reason when we are being asked a question about H.A. in these settings, it is vital to have a comprehensive understanding of the 12 traditions. You are a living example of what the program has to offer, share how H.A. has worked for you!

Commonly Asked Questions

Here are some questions that have been asked about our fellowship that we have found a high importance in listing, with some suggestive material that should be considered when responding.

“Although I’m not an addict or member of H.A., I’d like to make a donation to your cause! How can I go about doing so?”

At many public events there will be other non-profit organizations that will take donations, so it is common that people take interest in wanting to give money or charity to a beneficial fellowship like H.A. The public doesn’t know what our traditions are or the significance of why we follow them. We may need to inform them of our 7th tradition, that we don’t take outside contributions and find importance in being fully self supporting.

“Is H.A. a part of A.A. or N.A.?”

Despite the commonalities between the structure and purpose of these programs, we are still separate from any other 12 step fellowship. In the spirit of our 6th tradition, it is recommended that we respond accordingly, not affiliating ourselves with any other outside enterprises. In H.A., our primary purpose is to carry the message to the heroin addict who still suffers.

“Do you need to be clean to attend meetings?”

“Are fentanyl/oxycontin or other opioid addicts welcome in H.A.?”

“Are those who are on Medically Assisted Treatment drugs considered clean?”

All of these questions pose very difficult responses from within the entirety of our group conscious. We may be tempted to answer with an opinion of our own, but that is not a representation of how our fellowship feels as a whole. Although as members of H.A. we often promote a lifestyle of complete abstinence from all drugs and alcohol, no one in this fellowship can tell others whether they are or are not powerless over other substances. Falling back on our standard of traditions, we’ve found it best to resolve this inquiry with a statement similar to

that of our 3rd tradition: “The only requirement for H.A. membership is a desire to stop suffering from heroin addiction”.

“Why is heroin such a problem?”

“How are all these drugs coming into our country?”

“Is fentanyl worse than heroin?”

Such questions as these are often asked and may not even seem like they should be thought over carefully, but truthfully they are outside issues that we have no business in answering directly. We all have our own individual beliefs on subjects like these, but keeping in mind that we are representing the fellowship, we should withhold from delving into such topics. In spirit of our 10th tradition which states “Heroin Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the H.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.”, we should refrain from taking any viewpoint on these types of inquiries. Here in H.A. we are concerned only with recovery.

“What treatment center should I get my loved one into?”

“What’s the best sober living around here?”

“Do you think methadone/suboxone/vivitrol/etc. should be used by those in recovery?”

Taking the time to think critically about our reactions to impulse-provoking questions like these, we should always maintain consciousness about removing our personal feelings on such matters that are not related to Heroin Anonymous. We feel that medical advice is best left to the professionals, and even if our members have careers in the field of recovery we recommend that they not give such counsel when representing H.A. We may have a lot of experience with other

types of recovery programs and pathways, but it is suggested that we do not share them in detail to avoid endorsing or affiliating our fellowship with those enterprises and organizations.

“Why do members remain anonymous, are you a secret society?”

The topic of anonymity is often brought up by those who don't understand our need for it. It might be asked why we practice it or if we are trying to keep secrets because of it. Understanding the value of our traditions comes with experience, and explaining it to the best of your ability still may not be sufficient to them. In some cases all we can do is describe our 12th tradition that reads “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities”.

Training your fellow accompanying members in practical situations that might occur during the event is a great tool for preparation. Go over the commonly asked questions, and have them practice playing out different inquiries and answers. Remind them of the utmost importance of our traditions, and ask them to go over this portion of the PI handbook or its entirety if possible.

Some public events that H.A. would be represented at could have media and news coverage. It is suggested that members follow the 11th tradition that states “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”. It is advised to read the Working With The Media portion of this handbook and to communicate to the media the importance of our tradition of anonymity. We don't necessarily need to avoid the media altogether, but we feel the traditions should not be sacrificed in place of spreading awareness about H.A. In this handbook we have provided an Anonymity Agreement letter that can be used to safeguard ourselves and our fellowship in such facilitated media situations.

Ultimately, events that place us together with other recovery resources and organizations creates a greater opportunity for us to carry the message. People will want to know where they can get to a meeting in their area, and how they can become a part of our fellowship. Medical professionals will want information about us so they can refer their patients to our meetings. If there are institutions that want information on how to get a meeting started or have an H.A. member come speak at their facility, it is suggested that you inform them about your area's Hospitals and Institutions services and help them get in contact with a member of that committee. Working closely with H&I at these events can be really efficient in spreading awareness about what H.A. has to offer. Having recovery and healthcare professionals leave their business cards and exchanging contact information are great ways to establish relationships with members of your community. Within tradition, use the resources available to you to network with the types of institutions that H.A. can offer services to. Reach out to your local H.A. community for assistance or contact H.A.W.S., we are happy to help with any questions!