

## Development

Narcotics Anonymous sprang from the Alcoholics Anonymous Program of the late 1940s, with NA meetings first emerging in the Los Angeles area of California, USA, in the early 1950s. The NA program started as a small US organization that has grown into one of the world's oldest and largest international 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. Within a few years, groups had formed in Brazil, Colombia, Germany, India, the Irish Republic, Japan, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. In 1983, Narcotics Anonymous published its self-titled Basic Text book, which contributed to its tremendous growth; by year's end, NA had grown to more than a dozen countries and had 2,966 meetings.

Today, Narcotics Anonymous is well established throughout much of North and South America, Western Europe, Australia, the Middle East, New Zealand and Eastern Europe. Newly formed groups and NA communities can be found scattered throughout the Indian subcontinent, Africa, and East Asia. Today the organization is truly a worldwide multilingual multicultural fellowship with more than 58,000 weekly meetings in 131 countries\*. Narcotics Anonymous books and information pamphlets are currently available in 39 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. Narcotics Anonymous provides a recovery process and peer support network that are 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. Narcotics Anonymous itself is a non-religious program of recovery; each member is encouraged to cultivate an individual understanding—religious or not—of the spiritual principles and apply these principles to everyday life.

There are no social, religious, economic, racial, ethnic, national, gender, or class-status membership restrictions. There are no dues or fees for membership; most members regularly contribute in meetings to help cover the expenses incurred for the rent of facility space.

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 offer 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 expressed in NA's literature.

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

In a country where Narcotics Anonymous is a relatively new and emerging fellowship, 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 elect representatives to form a local service committee. These local committees usually offer a number of services. Included among them are:

- [distribution of NA literature;](#)
- [helpline information services;](#)
- [presentations for treatment and healthcare staff, civic organizations, government agencies, and schools;](#)
- [presentations to acquaint treatment or correctional facility clients with the NA program; and](#)
- [maintaining NA meeting directories for individual information and for any interested person.](#)

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 operate 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 emerging and developing NA communities and the translation of Narcotics Anonymous literature. For additional information, contact the NA World Services headquarters in Los Angeles, California. The mailing address, telephone number, fax number, and website address appear at the end of this pamphlet.

## Organizational Philosophy

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 strives to be entirely self-supporting through member contributions and does not accept financial contributions from non-members. Based on the same principle, groups and service committees are administered by NA members, for members.

Narcotics Anonymous neither endorses nor opposes any other organization's philosophy or methodology. NA's primary focus is in providing a recovery environment whereby drug addicts can share their recovery experiences with one another. By remaining free from the distraction of controversy, NA is able to focus all of its energy on its particular area of purpose.

## Cooperating with Narcotics Anonymous

Although certain traditions guide its relations with other organizations, Narcotics Anonymous

welcomes the cooperation of those in government, the clergy, treatment and healthcare professions, criminal justice organizations and private voluntary organizations. NA's nonaddict friends have been instrumental in getting Narcotics Anonymous started in many countries and helping NA grow worldwide.

NA strives to cooperate with others interested in Narcotics Anonymous. Our more common cooperation approaches are: providing contact information, disseminating recovery literature, and sharing information about recovery. Additionally, NA members are often available to provide presentations for treatment centers and correctional facilities, offering information about the NA program to the professional staff and sharing 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. Usually, members of one particular social or economic class start and sustain most developing NA communities worldwide, but as their fellowship development activities become more effective, the membership becomes more broadly representative of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

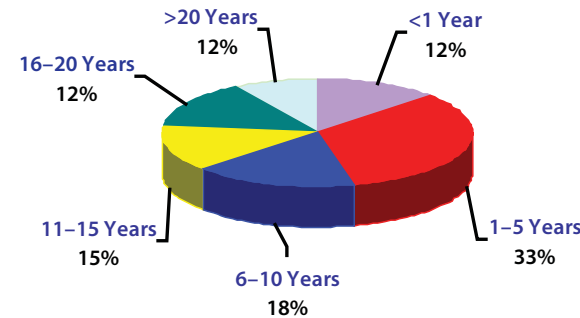
All ethnic and religious backgrounds are represented among NA members. Once a developing NA community reaches a certain level of maturity, its membership generally reflects the diversity or homogeneity of the background culture.

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 conven-

tions; the diversity of our membership, especially ethnic background, seems to be representative of the geographic location of the survey. The following demographic information was gathered from a survey completed by approximately 11,723 NA members. The survey was made available at the 2009 World Convention of NA in Barcelona, Spain, in our international journal, *The NA Way Magazine*, and on our website:

- Gender: 58% male, 42% female.
- Age: 2% 20 years old and under, 14% 21–30 years old, 22% 31–40 years old, 34% 41–50 years old, 24% 51–60 years old, and 4% over 60 years old.
- Ethnicity: 73% Caucasian, 10% African-American, 10% Hispanic, and 7% other.
- Employment status: 61% employed full-time, 10% employed part-time, 11% unemployed, 7% retired, 4% homemakers, and 7% students.
- Continuous abstinence/recovery: ranged from less than one year up to 40 years, with a mean of 9.1 years.

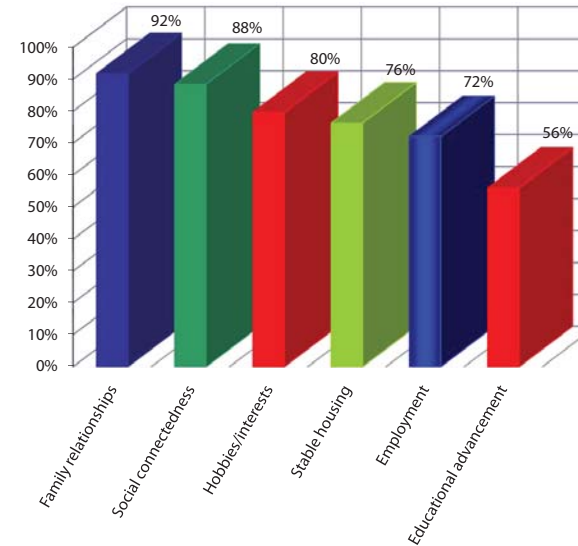
## Years Drug-Free



NA members have an average of 9.1 years clean. This can be compared to NA's last survey, which was the 2007 Membership Survey, showed members with an average of 9.09 years clean.

## Quality of Life Improvement Areas

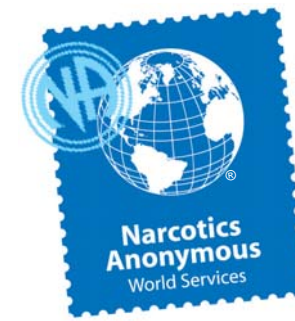
Multiple answers were allowed.



The 2009 Membership Survey marks the second time that members were asked to respond to areas of their lives that have improved with NA attendance. We initially asked this question in 2007 and found the responses informative about recovery in NA. The two areas that received overwhelming improvement were Family Relationships where 92% of our members stated enrichment and Social Connectedness was realized by 88% of the respondents. NA's literature states that active addiction is marked by increased isolation and destruction with relationships. Recovery in NA has helped survey respondents to repair the damage in their lives from drug addiction.

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# Information about NA

Narcotics Anonymous is an international, community-based association of recovering drug addicts with more than 58,000 weekly meetings in 131 countries worldwide.



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