

What Is an H&I Meeting?

The purpose of an H&I meeting is to carry the message of recovery to addicts who do not have full access to regular Narcotics Anonymous meetings. H&I meetings, except for those in long-term facilities, are intended to introduce those addicts in attendance to the basics of the NA program.

In our (Oahu) area, we use two kinds of H&I meetings; panel presentations and recovery-style meetings. We do the panel presentations in treatment centers, and they are primarily informational in nature. The recovery-style meetings which we use in the correctional facilities, are very similar to outside speaker/discussion or literature study meetings.

In order to form a clear understanding of an H&I meeting, it is important to learn about our service structure. An H&I meeting is generally a service provided an area service committee's H&I subcommittee.

This is true in our area. H&I meetings are not autonomous, but are accountable to the H&I subcommittee and our area service committee. Oahu ASC provides funds to operate H&I functions and bring literature in to the facilities we visit. The H&I subcommittee provides the liaison and facilitate the training (where required) for the H&I members active in the field.

These meetings occur in hospitals, treatment centers, correctional facilities, and adolescent institutions. Rather than being an NA group, it is vital that an H&I meeting always be held under the direction of an H&I subcommittee.

Because "personal recovery depends on NA unity", it is vital to our service that those addicts in attendance at H&I meetings receive a clear, consistent message of Narcotics Anonymous recovery. Our H&I members know that this is not the place to air their dirty laundry, or discuss their personal stories in other than general terms. Our 10th tradition tells us that we have no opinion on outside issues, so we refrain from discussing facility issues, and issues with other fellowships.

In the prisons, we see the same kind of addicts as we do in outside meetings- they're just all wearing the same clothes! Some come for the recovery, some come just to get their paper signed. They all understand that we are volunteering our time to come into the prison, and they are grateful for our being there. H&I meetings give the incarcerated addicts an opportunity to experience addicts who are serious about their recovery, who believe in the NA program, and who carry the message through selfless service.

One difference in H&I meetings is that we allow the inmates to ask questions about our program during the sharing portion of our meetings. Quite often, a pointed question will break the ice, and open the meeting up for discussion. We are careful, however, to protect our anonymity by not revealing personal information about ourselves, or others in the program.

Prison meetings are not under surveillance, but we do have to conform to various prison rules. Dressing appropriately and conforming to contraband restrictions are simple to follow. Somewhat harder to accept are the times when we show up, and are turned back at the gate due to restricted inmate movement, or “lockdown” within the prison. Those of us in H&I service know that we are not in charge, and accept that these interruptions are part of the H&I service we’ve committed to.

H&I service guidelines tell us that we ought to honor our 12th tradition by never going into a facility alone to conduct an H&I meeting. The danger here is that we run the risk of having our egos distort the NA message. However, due to the lack of active H&I members in the Oahu area, we are often left with the choice to either do the meetings alone, or not go into the facility at all. Going into a prison regularly with a partner for an H&I meeting is one of the more consistently rewarding experiences I’ve had in my recovery. No matter who I’m teamed up with, the focus of the evening is on recovery. We each feel extra grateful, because we all know what it’s like to go it alone. Ask any H&I member; they’ll tell you the conversations they’ve had walking in and walking out of a facility were often close to magical moments.