

Pills Anonymous
Public Information Guide
2011 Edition

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Pills Anonymous Public Information Guide

This guide is service material, reflecting P.A. experience shared at the World Service Conference. P.A. guides are compiled from the practical experience of P.A. members in the various service positions. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the World Service Conference (U.S./Canada).

www.pillsanonymous.org

Pills Anonymous World Services, Inc.



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Introduction

What is Public Information work and Why Should Pills Anonymous Do It?

Public Information (P.I.) in Pills Anonymous means carrying the message of recovery to the still-suffering pill addict by informing the general public about the P.A. program. We carry the message by getting in touch with the media, schools, industry, and other organizations which can report on the nature and purpose of P.A. and what it can do for the pill addict.

This guide will take you through the Public Information process. The pages that follow suggest ways individuals can organize and perform P.I. work, as well as activities that have been successful for local Public Information committees.

Those undertaking Public Information work for the first time, whether it be at the World or local level, are encouraged to read and take guidance from the information contained here. It is suggested that members taking part in Public Information work should have several years of continuous sobriety.

The first Public Information committee in P.A. was formed by the World Service Conference in 2008.

The following is a statement of the “Pills Anonymous Public Information policy”. In all public relations, Pills Anonymous’ sole objective is to help the still suffering pill addict. Always mindful of the importance of personal anonymity we believe this can be done by making known to him, and to those who may be interested in his problems, our own experience as individuals and as a Fellowship in learning to live without our addiction to pills. We believe that our experience should be made available freely to all who express sincere interest. We believe further that all efforts in this field should always reflect our gratitude for the gift of sobriety and our awareness that many outside P.A. are equally concerned with the serious problem of addiction.

Public Information takes many forms—the simple sign outside a meeting place that says “P.A. meeting tonight;” listing in local phone directories; distribution of P.A. literature; and radio and television shows using sophisticated media techniques. Whatever the form, it comes down to “one addict carrying the message to another addict,” whether through personal contact or through the use of third parties and the media.

The needs and experiences of people in your own area, large or small, urban or rural, will affect what you decide to do. The suggestions in this guide are just that—suggestions—to spark our thinking on how best to work at carrying the message.

Forming a P.I. Committee

There are different ways in organizing a P.I. committee. Local needs and practices will guide you regarding whether you work primarily through the local area or World Service Office.

The P.A. Guidelines, Public Information, are your most complete resource, along with other material found in the Public Information Guide and the folder that comes with it. The Guidelines stem from shared experience of several groups in the forming of Public Information committees.

Once you decide to form a Public Information committee, it is a good idea to take it easy at first until you are sure just what the needs are, and how many people you have available to get the job done. In some instances, the first task for a committee is to inform the P.A. members in your area about the need to communicate with the public. Sometimes you need to correct misconceptions about whether P.A. members should be going out to non- P.A. members. A few Public Information committees have reported resistance from members who fear they will be doing “promotion” by letting professionals and the public know about P.A.

Therefore, total and candid communication within P.A. about Public Information work is important. Your first audience is the Fellowship itself. Some Public Information committees share with one another by exchanging minutes of their meetings.

It is also helpful to share your activities and ideas with PAWS. Public Information committee members can be visible to other P.A. members through participation in their group and other business meetings.

The P.A. program works when an active pill addict wants help, and P.A. is on hand to give that help. However, somewhere in the background, there has usually been the help of a doctor, addiction agency or facility, relative, employer, teacher, someone who knew about P.A. and where to find it.

Suggested P.I. Committee Goals

As part of P.I. shared experience, the following is a list of goals from a P.I. committee:

1. Make sure every public library has at least one Conference approved book.
2. Let the Fellowship know how to reach out to the hearing impaired.
3. Place a literature rack in every high school, college, police station, library and hospital in the district and keep the rack stocked with appropriate literature and meeting schedules.
4. Send a letter to high schools, offering P.A. literature and/or a presentation on P.A.—what we do and what we do not do. (See Guide Letters in this Guide.)
5. Send a letter to convalescent homes, rest homes and senior centers in the district offering P.A. literature and/or a presentation on P.A. (See Guide Letters in this Guide.)
6. List OPEN P.A. meetings in the newspapers in the area.
7. Place a small (paid if necessary) announcement in every area newspaper around the holidays.

8. Work with the newspapers — anonymity, Traditions — generating interest in our Fellowship.
9. Respond to speaking requests at non-P.A. meetings in the district.
10. Place Public Service Announcements with radio and television stations.
11. Put meeting schedules behind the front desks at every hotel, motel and bed and breakfast.
12. Participate in Pills Anonymous World Service Conference.
13. Fight apathy within the Fellowship, find a co-chair and interested people in order to achieve all the above, and most importantly, keep your sanity and stay away from the first Pill.

Working within the Traditions

The Twelve Traditions are *our* Traditions and the responsibility for preserving them is *ours*. Many P.I. committees place fundamental importance on informing the committee members about these Traditions—what they are and why they came into being. With this ground work, P.I. committees can effectively communicate P.A. principles to the general public and to representatives of the media. We cannot expect others to understand and observe the Traditions if we are poorly informed ourselves. Sadly, we have also found that lack of information can lead to intolerance. For example, if an P.A. member's anonymity is broken at the media level, it is often quite simply the result of a misunderstanding. A courteous note explaining the Tradition to the member involved is helpful; a snap, critical judgment is not. Politeness and quiet explanation are the P.A. way. An understanding of all the Traditions and a firm grasp of the anonymity Traditions are especially vital. The pamphlet "Understanding Anonymity" is useful in making the P.A. anonymity principle clear to the public. (Remember, it is not a break of Tradition Eleven when you privately identify yourself as an P.A. member to non- P.A. members encountered in the course of P.I. work.)

Traditions Are Our Guide

Thoughtful reading of P.A. literature is essential for anyone who works with non-P.A. members.

Of course, all the Traditions are important in this Twelfth Step work; and Traditions Six, Eight, Eleven and Twelve are directly related to it.

Tradition Six: "A P.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the P.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose."

Today, addiction is a major concern of many local, state, provincial and national agencies. Many speak glowingly of the P.A. program and cooperate with P.A. groups and committees. To what extent should P.A. members participate in the programs of these agencies?

Experience has given us a simple guiding principle: We do cooperate, but we do not affiliate. We want to work constructively with other organizations in the field of addiction, but we do not want to be merged with them in the public mind. Public

linking of the P.A. name with that of another organization could give the impression of affiliation.

We should be careful to make it clear that P.A. is available as a resource for other agencies, and that we are always available to help and cooperate.

P.A. is concerned solely with the personal recovery and continued sobriety of individual pill addicts who turn to the Fellowship for help.

Pills Anonymous does not engage in the fields of addiction research, medical or psychiatric treatment, or propaganda in any form, although members may participate in such activities as individuals.

Committees on Cooperation with the Professional Community, too, are especially aware of the Sixth and Seventh Traditions.

Doing What We Do Best

We stick to what we know best—personal recovery and Twelfth-Step work. We are not authorities on the whole field of addiction. We share our recovery program, but we are not professionals. We have no official definition of addiction. Although we are victims of the illness, we have no profound knowledge of its cause or “cure.”

Public Information workers are frequently involved in activities at the media level. P.A. is not a secret society, and we carry the message to whomever we can. If a suffering pill addict never meets an P.A. member, how is he or she going to find us? We must, however, be ever aware of the need to remain anonymous at the public level; we must try to give the media an accurate picture of the P.A. Fellowship as a whole.

P.A. members who carry the message through public information have found it essential to emphasize and to remember that P.A. is a Fellowship of peers.

Workshops and Meeting Formats

Many committees have found that workshops provide a way of taking a look at local needs, opportunities and attitudes, as well as the service structure, the Traditions, etc. Workshops are also fine tools for exploring ideas and settling on methods.

A Sample Workshop

Here is what was done in one area:

An all-day workshop was planned. It was opened with the Serenity Prayer, then followed by a reading of the short form of the Twelve Concepts. The Fifth Tradition was also read, and related to the First Concept. The Tradition says that each group has one primary purpose— to carry the message; the Concept states that ultimate responsibility and authority belong to the P.A. groups. The bulk of the day was devoted to discussion, with the full group breaking up into seven small tables. Before the discussion began, a brief presentation on Public Information was given.

Two discussion topics were assigned to each table, and a recorder was appointed to take notes and report on the whole group. Topics were:

1. What is the best way to form a P.I. Committee?

How do we form a working plan for the committee?

2. What is the best way to reach professionals?

What is the best way to sponsor professionals?

3. How can we sponsor members in service?

How can we sponsor doctors, clergy, and police?

4. How can we bridge the gap between professionals and P.A.?

What types of presentations are appropriate for professionals?

5. What are the best P.A. attitudes toward professionals?

6. How can we make contact with professionals?

7. What literature is best, and from whom?

Brief summaries of the discussion were reported from each table, and general discussion took place.

Relations with the Professional Community

In some localities, relations with the professional community are still handled by the Public Information committee; in others, a committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community is formed.

We can always, of course, take action *as individuals* to establish good relations with the medical profession. For example, we can identify ourselves as P.A. members to the doctors who knew us as practicing pill addicts, and thank the doctor for his or her help with our problem. We can show appreciation to hospitals and nursing staffs, by saying thanks in person and by writing thank-you letters.

As a committee, we can keep physicians supplied with P.A. literature.

We can make a point of inviting our own doctors or others we know in the medical profession to open meetings, making sure they know they are welcome

to any open meeting of P.A. We can keep in touch with those who refer patients to P.A., letting them know how we or other former and present patients are doing. Similarly, P.I. committees communicate in the same way with lawyers, educators, the clergy and others.

Community or Public Information Meetings

The P.A. program works when an active pill addict *wants* help, and a P.A. is on hand to give that help. But, somewhere in the background, there has probably been help from an employer, a doctor, an addiction agency or facility, or relative—someone who knew about P.A. and how to find us.

From the beginning, P.A. has depended on good community relations to keep its “helping hands” informed and ready. Here are some ways P.A. members in an area can tell others about P.A., and keep the friends of P.A. working with us.

A community or public information meeting can do a lot to strengthen relationships with non-pill addict friends, and help make new friends. The committee invites doctors, members of the clergy, law enforcement officers, employers, public service workers, and others who deal with active pill addicts to a special open meeting.

Invitations should be mailed, ten days before the meeting, to groups in the area, friends of P.A., and those who are interested in the problem of addiction—doctors, judges, addiction agencies, clergy, personnel directors, social workers, and, of course, the press.

The announcement below is one suggested format:

The _____ Public Information Committee (or group) of
Pills Anonymous invites you, your family, and friends to a
Community Meeting about Pills Anonymous

The meeting will be held at _____ on _____.

It will start promptly at _____ and end at _____.

Speakers: John S., Chairperson

Dr. Maureen Blank, “The Medical View”

Bert L. and Doris G.

Sample Meeting Format

There are many kinds of successful public information meeting programs.

Here is one that is frequently followed:

1. A short welcome and introduction is given by the P.A. chairperson, who should try to cover all or most of these points:

- Welcoming remarks, mentioning P.A.’s willingness to help whenever and wherever it can.
- Anonymity: Requesting that the press and all present cooperate with our P.A. Tradition and respect the anonymity of P.A. members present.
- The following is often said:

“There may be some here who are not familiar with our Tradition of personal anonymity at the media level. Our public relations policy is based on attraction, not promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV and films. Therefore, we respectfully ask

- that no P.A. member be identified by full name or photograph in published or broadcast reports of this meeting.”
- What P.A. is and is not, and what P.A. members have discovered about their problem.
 - The P.A. program works to arrest the illness of addiction.
 - P.A. is for all faiths and those of no faith. It is for men and women of all ages.
 - Speakers' opinions are their own.
 - P.A.'s Tradition of self-support (*no* collection at this meeting).
 - P.A. helps keep the member sober, as well as getting him or her sober.
 - P.A. can be found in most cities and towns. Look for a listing in the local telephone directory or check local newspapers.
 - Many non- P.A. member have helped us. (At this point, introduce non-P.A. speaker.)
2. A non-P.A. guest speaker (public service worker, judge, minister, executive) discusses P.A. from his or her point of view and experiences.
 3. Either another non-P.A. speaks or a P.A. member speaks briefly about his or her own drinking experience and explains the P.A. program— how it works, and what it does and does not do.
 4. A P.A. member gives his or her drinking and recovery story in some detail. (P.A. speakers should understand when they are invited that non- P.A. member will be present.)
 5. Concluding remarks by the chairperson: “Keep an open mind. If you suspect you have a pill problem, you’ve come to the right place to find out, and to find help.” Explain where P.A. help is available in the community.

Participating in Non-P.A. Events

In keeping with our Tradition of cooperation but not affiliation, many P.A. Public Information committees participate in events sponsored by non-P.A. entities. Talks to outside groups are perhaps the most widely used and popular method of getting information across. Suggestions on this means of communication are found in the pamphlet “Speaking at Non-P.A. Meetings” and in the Public Information Guidelines.

One kind of event in which P.A. members are often asked to participate is the community or health fair, sponsored by local colleges, public health organizations, and so on. Members of the local P.I. committee frequently staff the P.A. booth at such events, answering questions and providing information as requested.

Presentations to Employers

Many industries recognize addiction as a tragically wasteful overhead and are encouraged to find that P.A. does not cost them either time or money. They know the advantages of a sober worker who attends P.A. and will often make available P.A. literature (as well as publicize P.A. awareness).

Experience has shown that a businesslike approach to industry is most likely to succeed. Telephone the personnel director's secretary to ascertain the name and title of the correct person who deals with addiction policies. Then contact that person by telephone, requesting an interview, and follow up by a letter of confirmation.

Once a meeting is arranged, offer the cooperation of Pills Anonymous. Explain what P.A. can do and cannot do. In most cases the personnel offices are pleased to receive local telephone numbers, a list of local meetings (without contact names or numbers), as well as posters and literature. Offer to talk to staff and/or management about the P.A. program.

Many companies publish internal magazines/newsletters and articles.

Information about P.A. can be included, thus carrying the message even more widely throughout the company.

We are reminded that P.A. has no opinion on addiction policies of businesses, but this does not mean that we cannot cooperate within our Traditions.

Carrying the Message through the Media

General Guidelines

Without the help of newspapers, magazines, radio and TV and most recently new media technologies such as the Internet, it is doubtful that P.A. could have reached into the lives of thousands of pill addicts. From the beginning, communications people have respected what P.A. does, have appreciated our Traditions, have trusted us and deserved our trust.

In dealing with the media, we have one real advantage: honesty. P.A. members are not, it is hoped, seeking personal gain or publicity, and the media respects us. Our aim is to help other suffering pill addicts, and we can approach local media people with the knowledge that we are trying to provide information that will be interesting and helpful to readers, listeners, and viewers. Remember, it's a wise public information person who gives an editor, news director, or reporter credit for having a conscientious desire to serve the public.

What Is "Real News"?

Opportunities for news about the Fellowship include facts about the growth of P.A., about male and female membership, about changing age ratios in the membership; as well as publication of a new Conference-approved pamphlet or book or an International Convention.

The activities suggested in this guide are newsworthy. Some are so familiar that we forget they may be news to non- P.A. members —the recovery story itself or talks at schools are frequently good press material. Area conferences and conventions are also newsworthy events.

Periodically, newspapers run three and four installment features on addiction and P.A. Close contact with your local newspaper can generate these features, and even more important, can give you the chance to work along with the writer in the interest of accuracy.

Similarly, local television news departments frequently run three- or four-part special reports on subjects of community interest. A contact to the stations news director about the story value of the P.A. recovery program may well be rewarded with a sincere thank you for a "story idea"!

In 2008, the board of trustees approved certain guidelines to be followed by the Public Information Committee in the release of information about P.A. to news sources. Among these principles are the following:

The release must be factual; boasting, disparagement of other groups concerned with the problem of addiction, or engagement in controversy in any form, whether by direct representation or by implication, must be carefully avoided.

We should recognize that our experience to speak about addiction is limited in subject matter to Pills Anonymous and its recovery program; hence, any statement in reference to other or broader aspects of the problem of addiction should be accurately attributed to authoritative sources outside the movement, identified by name.

Preserving Anonymity on Radio, TV and Internet Interviews

P.A. members occasionally participate in interviews on radio, TV and the Internet, with great benefit to the Fellowship and to suffering pill addicts. Many in the media are aware of the Anonymity Traditions, and accustomed to helping P.A. members preserve personal anonymity at the public level. For those media people, who are not aware of our Traditions, be sure to explain the need for personal anonymity on your part, and request their cooperation.

A P.A. who appears on radio, TV or the Internet and is identified as a P.A. member will find it safer to carefully arrange with the interviewer to use only his or her first name, and to appear in such a way that identification is impossible. "A full-face appearance on TV is an anonymity break, even though the name is withheld."

While doing an on-camera interview as a member of P.A., you can be shadowed, have your face scrambled electronically, or have your back to the camera. If a P.A. member plans to make a radio, TV or Internet appearance simply as a *recovered pill addict*, without disclosing P.A. membership, no question of anonymity arises. The P.A. appears as any other guest, using full name and full-face picture.

Press Interviews

When appearing on interview programs, as a P.A. member, with anonymity protected, explain to the interviewer in advance that P.A. members traditionally confine such discussions to the P.A. program. The member does not speak on or qualify as an expert on the disease of addiction, drugs, suicide rates, and so on. Traditionally, P.A. members preface their remarks by saying that they speak for themselves, not for the entire Fellowship. Generally, they state that the sole concern of P.A. is the recovery and continued sobriety of those pill addicts who turn to the Fellowship for help. When we speak as P.A. members, we are careful to say that P.A. has no opinion on other issues.

Talk Shows and Similar Programs

Many radio stations have regular talk phone-in shows (Open Line, Talk Back, Call Up, etc.), which provide an excellent opportunity to talk about P.A.'s role in the community. If there is such a program available in your community, call the station and inform the program director or talk show producer that you would like to provide a representative to talk about Pills Anonymous. You will be scheduled for a certain day and time.

P.A. Representative

Be sure that the person who represents P.A. is knowledgeable about the Traditions and Steps, and can converse in an intelligent and articulate manner. It is important that the representative be able to field questions about P.A. accurately, and remain level-headed. It is not uncommon for someone to call a talk show and attack the guest representative. If that happens, just make the point that P.A. does not engage in controversy.

Annual Anonymity Memo to Media

Following is a sample copy of the Anonymity Letter sent to the press each year from PAWS. This letter is sent to newspapers in the U.S. and Canada and also sent to radio and TV stations. It is suggested that local P.I. committees send the same letter to local newspapers, radio and TV.

Copies can be obtained from PAWS.

Letters from local people can mean more with hometown media than do mass mailings from Arizona.

A Note of Thanks, a Request for Cooperation

From time to time we write our public media friends to thank them for helping us observe our long-standing tradition of anonymity for members of Pills Anonymous.

First, let us express our gratitude to you. From the beginning of P.A. in 2008, its members have recognized that word-of-mouth is not sufficient by itself to carry the program's message of hope and recovery to the many people still suffering from addiction. The public media has been a vital part of this effort, and today we estimate that there are more than 5000 successfully recovering members of Pills Anonymous.

Second, we respectfully request that you continue to cooperate with us in maintaining the anonymity of our members. The principle of anonymity is a basic tenet of our fellowship. Those who are reluctant to seek our help may overcome their fear if they are confident that their anonymity will be respected. In addition, and perhaps less understood, our tradition of anonymity acts as a restraint on our members, reminding us that we are a program of principles, not personalities, and that no individual P.A. member may presume to act as a spokesman or leader of our fellowship. If a P.A. member is identified in the media, we ask that you please use first names only (e.g. Bob S. or Alice F.) and that you not use photographs or electronic images in which member's faces may be recognized. Again, we thank you for your continued cooperation. Those who wish to know more about our fellowship may visit www.pillsanonymous.org. Although our fellowship does not comment on matters of public controversy, we are happy to provide background information about P.A. to anyone who seeks it.

Sincerely,

Public Information Committee of Pills Anonymous

Public Service Announcements —PSAs

As a means of “attraction rather than promotion,” the World Service Conference of Pills Anonymous has voted the group conscience of P.A. as a whole in the United States and Canada to produce public service announcements for both radio and television.

We are trying our best to reach more of those 25 million pill addicts who today inhabit the world. We have to reach them directly and indirectly. In order to accomplish this it will be necessary that understanding of P.A. and public good will towards P.A. go on growing everywhere. We need to be on even better terms with medicine, religion, employers, governments, courts, prisons, mental hospitals, and all those conducting enterprises in the addiction field.

We need the increasing good will of editors, writers, television, and radio channels. These publicity outlets—local, national, and international— should be opened wider and wider, always foregoing, however, high pressure promotion tactics. It is to, and through, all these resources that we must try to carry the P.A. message to those who suffer addiction and its consequences.

Most radio, television and cable stations devote a specific amount of time annually to “broadcasts in the public interest,” and often this programming entails the airing of public service announcements. The

World Service Conference of Pills Anonymous will make available radio and television public service announcements produced by the trustees’ Committee on Public Information. In some areas, high-quality PSAs are successfully produced by P.I. committees at a most reasonable cost. With our Traditions as the foundation, PSAs can be constructed to show that P.A. is local.

Approaching Local Broadcast Facilities

In seeking to have public service announcements aired, you may telephone the broadcast station’s community relations or public service person, program director or general manager, and ask if you may personally deliver to them a recorded or videotaped public service announcement—even if you are told to simply mail the material to a particular individual, *contact the person*. Explain who you are, making it clear you are a volunteer. To identify yourself as a P.A. member is *not* breaking the anonymity Traditions.

Local P.A. identifications: The television and radio PSAs do not require a local telephone number. A local telephone number, as well as other information—such as a tag line indicating “this is a Public Service Announcement”—can be added to television PSAs by your local station. Often your local station will offer to do the minor production necessary, or you may ask them to do so.

Contact more than one station: A P.A. spot campaign should not be exclusive with any one station, nor does the station expect it to be.

When the station has used the spots, a thank-you note to your contact on behalf of P.A. is very important. (It will also be a valued addition to the station’s public service files.)

Some radio DJs prefer to have print or electronic copies of our radio PSA scripts. These are available from PAWS.

Anonymity

Introduction

An understanding of anonymity in P.A. is the first prerequisite for being effective in public information. At first glance the terms anonymity and public information seem to contradict each other.

Reflections on Anonymity from the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

- *We need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.*
- *Anonymity to this extent is actually the practice of genuine humility.*
- *Even within the Fellowship every member's name and story needs to be confidential if the member so wishes it.*
- *Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion.*
- *As a Fellowship, we wish to publicize our principles and our work but not individual members.*
- *To us the Tradition of anonymity is far more than a sound public relations policy. It is more a denial of self-seeking.*
- *This Tradition of anonymity is a constant and practical reminder that personal ambition has no place in P.A.*
- *The spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice.*
- *Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction both among fellow pill addicts and before the general public.*
- *We are sure that humility, expressed by anonymity, is the greatest safeguard that Pills Anonymous can ever have.*

Guide Letters

For many Public Information committees, contact with the professional whose work may be involved with the active pill addict is made by letter and a follow-up visit.

In this section you will find sample letters used by Public Information committees. The most effective letters and phone calls include some or all of the following elements:

Information about P.A.—Phrases from the Preamble can be quoted, or a few sentences can describe what P.A. is and what it can and cannot do. Many letters enclose literature.

A Request to Cooperate with the Professional—A P.A. contact can be suggested, giving the local Public Information Committee mailing address. (Many letters explain that P.A. members are available and interested in helping to come and talk about P.A., put on a public P.A. meeting, provide literature, and so on.)

Information about the Traditions, Making Clear What P.A. Does and Does Not Do—Clarification of the Traditions is important, particularly those that relate to non-affiliation and anonymity.

Reminder: The following material is presented as a guide only. These letters are just samples intended to give you a “jumping-off” point; they may be modified to suit the needs of your own area.

Guide Letter to Schools

Dear _____:

We of the _____ Public Information Committee of Pills Anonymous would welcome the opportunity to provide information about our program of recovery from addiction to your students.

With your permission, we could share how so many of us, including young people, have been able to arrest pill addiction through the Fellowship of Pills Anonymous. Here are some flyers and pamphlets for your information.

We look forward to hearing from you, and to providing any further information about Pills Anonymous.

Sincerely,

Guide Letter Inviting Professional to Take Part in Workshop

Dear _____:

The _____ Area Public Information Committee of Pills Anonymous will hold a workshop for P.A. members and others who are interested in helping pill addicts maintain sobriety through the P.A. program of recovery.

We would be delighted if you agreed to take part in a panel discussion on the subject of _____. This panel will be held from _____ p.m. to _____ p.m.

on _____. Some of the other panelists will be _____, _____, and _____. A preliminary program for this workshop is enclosed.

It is only through the kind cooperation of so many of our non-pill addict friends like you that P.A. now has well over 5000 members.

The _____ panel of our workshop would be greatly enhanced by the addition of your insight and professional expertise.

Please let us know by _____ if you will join us.

Sincerely yours,

Enclosure: Preliminary program

Guide Letter to Physicians

Dear _____:

You may be familiar with Pills Anonymous, and have patients with addiction problems whom you may want to send to P.A. Perhaps we can help you help our fellow pill addicts. The attached Fact Sheet explains briefly what P.A. is and what it is not.

If you have questions about P.A., a P.A. member would be glad to talk with you. He or she is also available to introduce your pill addict patient to our Fellowship. For any of the pamphlets listed below, please check and return the list in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. We want you to know that the

_____ Public Information Committee of Pills Anonymous is here to be of service to you.

Sincerely,

Guide Letter to Police Department

Dear _____:

We of the _____ Public Information Committee of Pills Anonymous request your permission to visit your headquarters to provide information about our program of recovery from addiction.

Pills Anonymous has cooperated for many years with local DWI and other programs. Many members of P.A. were once in trouble with the law because of addiction. Today they are useful, productive citizens and safe drivers.

Pills Anonymous is not affiliated with any other organization or institution. We want you to know that we are available to be of help to you.

Sincerely,

Guide Letter to the Clergy

Dear _____:

We of the _____ Public Information Committee of Pills Anonymous would like to offer information about P.A., through you, to members of your congregation who may have a prescription pill problem. We

know that you are in a unique position to have contact with and help the active pill addict.

Pills Anonymous is a worldwide fellowship of men and women who help each other to maintain sobriety through sharing their recovery experience with others. The enclosed postcard returned to us with any or all of the boxes checked will be answered promptly with a phone call to arrange an answer to your request in the manner most convenient to you.

Sincerely,

(Postcard)

1. Would you be interested in having a P.A. member(s) speak to any of your individual members or groups? _____
2. Would you be interested in accompanying a P.A. member to an *open* meeting of Pills Anonymous? (Open meetings are for pill addicts and non-pill addicts)

3. Would you like us to provide you with a schedule of P.A. meetings, dates, times, and locations? _____

Guide Letter to Senior Citizen Centers

Dear _____:

Today, we hear a great deal about addiction among young people. Far less is said about the alarming increase in pill addiction among older persons; a fact that is causing concern to everyone involved with addiction, and with recovery from this serious illness.

We of the _____ Public Information Committee of Pills Anonymous are making available on request a speaker on the recovery program of P.A. The speaker is a former problem pill user with some years of sobriety, well qualified to answer questions about how pill addicts can recover in P.A. Our experience shows that even those with no drinking problem of their own find such programs intensely interesting, for in our society almost everyone has a relative or friend whose pill use is a cause for worry.

If we can supply your organization with literature or any additional information, please write or call.

Sincerely,

Guide Letters to Broadcast Outlets

Example 1:

Here are the public service spots that you requested. Pills Anonymous has well over 5000 members.

Here in _____, we have almost _____ separate P.A. groups which meet once or more each week.

Pills Anonymous is a program of attraction rather than promotion,

and members remain anonymous at the public level. With anonymity protected, however, we are glad to be guests on discussion, telephone talk, or community interest shows. If you would like help in bringing the story of Pills Anonymous in this area to your audience, please contact me at the address below. The enclosed P.A. literature is for your further information. Thanks again for your interest in Pills Anonymous.
Sincerely,

Example 2:

Why does a college station need to air public service announcements from Pills Anonymous? Think of this: death from prescription pill overdose leads death from car accidents, whether the age is 18 or 88. Addiction is a disease— not an age! Enclosed please find public service announcements in a format suitable for your station.

We also have qualified young members of P.A. available for public affairs or interview programs. Just call or write if P.A. can be of service.
Sincerely,

Sample Newspaper Announcements

Some committees place small, paid announcements in local newspapers. In case you need to buy space, here are some suggested announcements:

If you want to use Pills, that's your business.
If you want to stop, that's ours.
Call Pills Anonymous
(Address and telephone)

If you want to use Pills, that's your business.
If you want to stop, we can help.
Call Pills Anonymous
(Telephone)

Have you sometimes wished you could spend a holiday sober?
Call Pills Anonymous
(Telephone)

Cards and Signs

These are often used to offer the telephone number of the nearest P.A. contact, or to give the times and places of nearby meetings.

Cards and signs have been placed in telephone offices, police stations, sheriffs' offices, hospitals, county infirmaries, hotels, and taxi stations.

Signs may be in the form of car cards (in buses or subway trains) or of road signs (those that welcome the traveler to "our town" by listing local lodges and civic clubs).

Telephone Directories

Sometimes, it is the local P.I. committee that is responsible for the P.A. listing in the phone book (including the Yellow Pages).

Help lines

There are different options you may use depending on the financial status and size of your Area.

1. Call your local phone company and get a basic phone line with call forwarding. Take turns forwarding the phone line to different members of the Fellowship. It is best to pass around a calendar and have people write down the times they are available to do this.

2. Have an answering service that can field the calls. Give out general information, such as meeting times and places, upcoming events, etc. If the caller needs to talk to a recovered addict, the answering service will call the addict who is on call and give them the number of the caller.

3. Instead of having an active phone line, you could set up a stand-alone voice mailbox system with your local phone company. Some have systems where you can press one number for meeting times and locations for each day of the week.

4. You can forward the phone line to a pager or cell phone, so callers can always reach someone.

5. There are some Areas that have computer software that can play meeting information over the phone line.

6. Utilize a web-based virtual receptionist. This can provide you with a toll-free number, answer calls, give meeting times and locations, take messages and even give callers the option to be transferred to volunteers in the Fellowship. It would be a good idea to call the Pills Anonymous World Service for their help on setting up a helpline.

Once your helpline is established, get listed in as many phone books as possible. It is suggested that you ask what listings can be made available at no cost. It may be possible for your helpline number to be listed in multiple places in the phonebook.

These may all be available at no charge. Suggested locations for publication are in the business white pages, in the yellow pages (under Prescription Pill

Addiction, Self-Help, Addiction, etc), in the white pages and under the emergency phone list.

It's a good idea to ask how callers heard about us and keep a log. This will help your Public Information Committee track what ads or PSAs are working, what agencies are recommending us, etc.

Suggested Guidelines for Help lines/Hotlines

We're glad you're here because it means you've chosen to be of service working the P.A. helpline. It is one of the most important commitments a P.A. member can make.

As helpline volunteers, we represent Pill Anonymous. We are a direct link to the public, and are quite often the first impression that a practicing addict will have of our Fellowship. Therefore, the sound of our voice, our attitude, our helpfulness and our courtesy—or lack thereof—could have a profound or devastating effect on the caller. We cannot overemphasize that fact. Understanding and a sincere desire to help are our principles and guidelines, and we should at all times be guided by the Twelve Traditions.

The P.A. helpline can literally save the life of the person on the other end of the line.

As a phone volunteer, you are an indispensable part of the P.A. program. At the same time, please bear in mind that "NO ONE CAN SPEAK FOR P.A." We share only from our own experience and recovery. "WE ARE NOT COUNSELORS, AND WE ARE NOT QUALIFIED TO ADVISE CALLERS TO TAKE ANY ACTION EXCEPT TO SUGGEST":

1. Stop using.
2. Attend P.A. meetings

REMEMBER, THE PHONE VOLUNTEER'S PRIMARY PURPOSE IS TO HELP THE ADDICT WHO IS STILL SUFFERING. OUR MAJOR OBJECTIVE IS TO SIMPLY GET THE NEWCOMER TO A P.A. MEETING. FOR THIS REASON, THE MEETING LIST IS OUR GREATEST TOOL.

Types of Phone Systems

Many Areas of P.A. have adopted their own guidelines for establishing helplines. They have used answering services, answering machines, voice mailbox systems, cell phones and/or individual members of the Fellowship.

If Your Area Uses an Answering Service:

1. Provide the answering service with a list of volunteers who agree to take calls or messages.
2. Use call forwarding from the service to phone volunteers.
3. The initial greeting may be, "Hello, may I help you?" It is not necessary to answer "Pills Anonymous."
4. Usually a 24-hour answering service will cross connect the calls to volunteers' homes. Some areas might have an office where volunteers have different shifts, and other Areas might have an automated phone service. The helpline,

regardless of the Area, is a 24-hour service. Anyone, at any time, should be able to contact a member of Pills Anonymous.

If Your Area Uses an Answering Machine:

1. Regularly check messages by using a roster to call in for messages.
2. If you have a recorded message with meeting times and locations, offer the caller a way to request to speak to a recovering addict.

Phone Volunteer Qualifications

Sobriety requirement: One year continuous sobriety, and six-month commitment. Phone volunteers need to go through an orientation on how to answer P.A. phone lines. Orientation entails training to work the phone. It is the only method we have to provide a standard of quality for the service we provide on the helpline.

PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO ANSWER THE HELPLINE IF THEY HAVE NOT GONE THROUGH AN ORIENTATION.

Do:

Remember to be polite—you may be the only contact the caller may have with P.A.

Find out the needs of the caller.

Share your experience, strength and hope.

Encourage callers to attend meetings.

Try to prevent keeping a caller on “hold” for too long.

Refer calls for Public Information (i.e., requests for speakers, radio, TV, or literature) to the local PI Chairperson.

Keep your calls short.

Encourage the caller to call 911 if there is an emergency.

Keep a log of all calls you receive and find out how they heard of P.A. if at all possible.

Don't:

Pick someone up at their home; agree to meet at a meeting or public facility.

Phone volunteers are advised not to go to the home of an addict, even if it is just to take him/her to a meeting.

Our Sixth Tradition states: “A P.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the P.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.”

This is why P.A. phone volunteers **MUST NOT** recommend any outside treatment (i.e., hospitals, doctors, treatment centers, etc.). This especially includes referring a caller to any specific hospital, institution, doctor(s), treatment center, etc., with which the phone volunteer may have personal knowledge or experience.

We **NEVER** give other members' last names or phone numbers out over the phone—remember anonymity! Based on members' previous experience, it is suggested that helpline volunteers do not give out their own last name or phone

number. If you receive a request to speak to a particular person, tell the caller that you can only take a message, and then write it on a message pad, or call the volunteer.

Don't try to persuade the caller to stop using drugs if they don't want to. Do not label them as an addict or state that they have a problem. Stick to what you hear, how it was for you, and what you did about it. People can learn a lot by listening to your story. Their defenses could come up if you try to tell them their story. Do not engage in prolonged drug-a-logues or comparison studies of drug use. Share in a general way what it was like, what happened, and what it is like now. Do not use profanity.

Don't feel you need to stay on the line with a caller who is in any way abusive or perverse, or who is quite simply too loaded to hear your part of the conversation. We don't like to turn away from those in pain, but sometimes calls can be shocking and traumatic. Recovery teaches us that to preserve our own sobriety, we must take care of ourselves first, and the helpline context is no exception. Reach out to another volunteer or Fellowship member if you are suffering from caller distress and give yourself permission to hang up promptly when a call is inappropriate. And if someone is too high to talk to right then, you can always say you want to talk with them, but they need to call you back when they are straight. The Fifth Tradition states that: "Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the addict who still suffers." However, the way to best help a caller varies with each situation. Try to communicate that there is help and that they are not alone. Feel free to let them know about your background so they are more comfortable speaking freely with you. Remember, you are not responsible for the results of the call—you're only responsible for passing on the message of recovery and hope. The purpose of the helpline is to let people know P.A. exists and to help them get to a meeting.

WE ARE HERE TO LISTEN AND PROVIDE HOPE...

Making Presentations on “What P.A. Is and What It Is Not”

A presentation outline has been prepared to assist P.A. members involved in sharing P.A. information with the general public.

The P.A. Information Program is designed to help guide Public Information committee members who are carrying the P.A. message to the still suffering pill addict through contact with the public.

Presentations by P.A. members follow an outline which explains what P.A. is and is not, where it is, and what it's like. Public Information talks, or presentations, may be adapted to meet the needs of a particular request and situation.

Guidelines

- 1. Remember this is basic Twelfth Step work through contact with the public. The purpose of P.A. is to help other pill addicts achieve sobriety.*
- 2. Avoid drug-a-logues. Keep comments close to P.A.-related matters. And, maintain our amateur standing; we are not experts when speaking as P.A. members.*
- 3. Look your best. First impressions are very important.*
- 4. Be on time.*

Presentation Outline

1. Introduction: “Why am I here?” — To carry the message of Pills Anonymous, what it is and what it is not.
- 2 Read and explain the P.A. Preamble.
4. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (explain them, not individually, but as a whole).
5. Describe types of meetings: open/closed, speaker, discussion, etc.
6. Where are P.A. meetings located? Provide meeting lists, if appropriate.
7. What to expect in P.A.:
 - a. What happens during various kinds of meetings.
 - b. Temporary and permanent sponsorship.
 - c. Fellowship: before, during, after meetings.
8. Describe P.A. Conference-approved literature in general. Explain that this literature is developed by P.A. and available to anyone. In most areas, literature can be obtained from the P.A. website.
9. Questions and answers. Keep it simple.
10. Express gratitude for the opportunity to share about P.A.; close.

PAWS Pills Anonymous Web Site

We have a P.A. Web site which you can locate at www.pillsanonymous.org
PAWS P.A. Web site gives information about Pills Anonymous.
PAWS P.A. Web site has been incredibly successful as a P.I. tool. We have received very positive comments from media professionals, librarians and students who are interested in Pills Anonymous. We invite you to visit our Web site and provide information about it in your P.I. presentations.