

SPONSORSHIP BEHIND THE WALLS (WRITING STEPS FOR RECOVERY) STARTER PACKET

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“MISSION”

Experience shows that the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel. Letter writing and reading can be a very powerful form of sharing our experience, strengths, and hopes. It is our hope that in our correspondence we will help the suffering addict find the solution that we have found. Our purpose is to carry the message of recovery. No addict, “anywhere”, need die from the horrors of addiction.

Sponsorship behind the walls Correspondence Guidelines

We are a “NA SPONSORSHIP” program operating under the Public Relations subcommittee of the Michigan Regional Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous.

This may well be one of the most rewarding things you do for your recovery. The primary purpose of this group is to provide Sponsorship, through the mail, for inmates who desire to work the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. It is our purpose to provide sponsors who are willing to correspond with any inmate who has the desire to work the steps. It is our hope that in our correspondence we will help the suffering addict find the solution that we have found. Our purpose is to remain clean, just for today, and to carry the message of recovery.

In observing the rules of the correctional Facilities regarding mail and correspondence, the following are suggested guidelines from shared experience to help you when writing NA members on the “Inside”:

- 1) Potential sponsors must have at least one year clean time, and be actively participating with a sponsor.
- 2) In keeping with Tradition Twelve, we respect the anonymity of our correspondents. All correspondence will be sent through a post office box, with a correspondence coordinator to forward mail to other members who are participating in the SBW’s program. No personal contact in person or by phone is permitted. All correspondence should be received through the Michigan Regional Service Committee. Never give out your address or phone number. For your own anonymity and protection, it is suggested you use your first name only or a pen name if you choose.
- 3) When we engage in this type of service, it should always be men writing to men, women writing to women. We believe it is best that no romantic involvements develop.
- 4) Never write anything you don’t want the world to read. All correspondence is opened and subject to monitoring by the institution.
- 5) Correctional Facilities have rules for sending literature. Most correctional facilities only allow inmates to receive literature directly from the publisher, so you should

always check with a facility before mailing books or literature. Photocopies are usually accepted. Most facilities do not allow inmates to receive stamps or pre-addressed, stamped envelopes.

6) If an inmate requests an NA book from you, the committee will send the inmate, upon your request, an Introductory Guide to Narcotics Anonymous.

7) NA members with correctional facility and H&I clearances may not correspond with inmates in those facilities.

8) We introduce ourselves briefly in our opening letter so the addict can get to know and identify with us. We always stay focused on recovery.

9) Remember, it only takes two addicts to have a meeting, writing is no different, so let the inmate know that like in all forms of sharing, this helps us as much as it helps him or her. Let them know they are never alone. We share our experience, strength, and hope, and being clean in recovery. Since change happens as a result of working/applying the principles behind the 12 steps of recovery, we encourage you to be a step-writing guide through that process.

10) Encourage the inmate to participate in twelve step meetings available to them in the facility.

11) Prior to their release, we strongly suggest sending them an area/regional meeting schedule where they will be released. It is important to have a “game plan” and knowledge of meeting places the first day they get out.

Thank you for taking part in your own recovery by sharing and caring the NA way so that “No addict seeking recovery need ever die.”

First Name Last Initial

C/O SBW

P.O. Box 51202

Kalamazoo, MI 49005

I hereby request to participate in the SBW program and agree to abide to all rules stated above. I also agree that I am representing MRSCNA and the NA program and will act accordingly to uphold the highest standards of conduct. If I fail to do so I can be removed from participation.

Signature of Applicant Date

Approved by Date

Sample Letter received

Narcotics Anonymous

P.O. Box

_____, MI. _____

Dear Fellow Addicts,

Hello, my name is ___ and I am an addict. I am writing to request help. I am currently in prison, approximately ten years now, with roughly 5 years clean. I am working the 12 steps and committing to the work has actually helped me get these days under my belt. I currently facilitate/chair meetings here in prison at the _____ Facility in Michigan and I need help!

We have Blue Books and a desire to stay clean.

Unfortunately Sponsors are a rare commodity behind these walls. Many guys do not have the clean time under their belts or familiarity with the steps to be effective sponsors.

Prisoner to prisoner mail has been eliminated and the lack of predictability in prison life makes it even harder to formulate the bonds and familiarity with one another to be effective sponsors to each other.

I am writing to see if possibly some fellow addicts would be willing to help us and provide sponsorship to some of us through correspondence....

H&I DO'S AND DON'TS

- **DO** Emphasize that in NA, recovery is available to any addict, regardless of "type" of drug(s) used
- **DO** Make it clear that NA is separate and distinct from the facility as well as other fellowships
 - **DO** Make directories of outside meetings available
 - **DO** Emphasize the importance of getting to an NA meeting the first day out
 - **DO** Emphasize the importance of getting a sponsor and a home group, the ongoing nature of recovery, and the importance of attending meetings (suggest 90 meetings in 90 days)
- **DON'T** Break another person's anonymity or tell his or her story
- **DON'T** Get involved in discussion about the inmate's guilt or innocence
- **DON'T** Debate which drugs are acceptable. NA is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs
- **DON'T** Discuss conditions within the facilities or opinions about staff members
- **DON'T** Give or receive gifts, money, or loans
- **DON'T** Give your personal address or phone number
- **DON'T** Take messages in or out of the facility
- **DON'T** Debate the merits of the treatment program or the other fellowships. Remember, we have no opinion on outside issues. The best approach is to focus on the positive and unique qualities of our program. Use references from your Basic Text. It is the foundation of our program of recovery.
- **DON'T** Comment on the methods used by a treatment facility. Not all facilities are Twelve Step based nor do their understandings of the Steps necessarily coincide with the understanding gained in Narcotics Anonymous. We share our experience without reference to the facility's methods or to inmates' comments
- **DON'T** While sharing, put too much focus on what it was like. They already know.

NA *Reaching Out* Newsletter Subscription Form

Reaching Out is a quarterly, recovery-oriented newsletter made available free of charge to incarcerated addicts through Narcotics Anonymous World Services. If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months and would like a free subscription to *Reaching Out*, you can let NA World services know by sending them the following completed form.

SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

I am an incarcerated addict (and will be for at least six more months) and want a free subscription to *Reaching Out*.

Name _____

Identification Number _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Country _____

Send your completed form to :*Reaching Out*

c/o NA World Services

PO Box 9999

Van Nuys, CA 91409 USA

Submission Information For Reaching Out Magazine:

*We encourage submissions for Reaching Out from members and H&I subcommittees. Please consider that we are more likely to publish articles that focus on how NA has helped an individual to recover while incarcerated rather than those that concentrate on the horrors of drug use. **Send***

all submissions to:

Reaching Out

NAWS, PO Box 9999

Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999