

Men working with Men, Women working with Women

H&I Service Bulletin #5

Men working with Men,
Women working with Women

Narcotics Anonymous is a twelve step program which is based on suggestions, one of which is "men work with men, women work with women." This suggestion is the result of countless members experience in both service work and personal recovery. This suggestion is highly recommended in H&I service work, where our contact with future members of our fellowship is forged.

Some facilities house only men or only women. Other facilities house both men and women, but keep them separate. In these facilities, where your meetings will consist of only men or only women, we feel strongly that only same sex Narcotics Anonymous members should participate.

Remember our primary purpose is to carry a clear and consistent message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. Our purpose is not to make our meetings more popular with the addicts we are trying to help. Problems that arise in this area have the potential to seriously damage the credibility of Narcotics Anonymous. Experience has taught us that we can avoid these problems, if we follow this simple guideline.

H&I service brings us into contact with future members in the initial stage of their recovery. At times members of an H&I committee may act in ways that detract from our primary purpose. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, we are not only risking the reputation of Narcotics Anonymous as a whole, addicts who need to hear our life saving message may not do so and may die as a result. This may seem dramatic, but past experience has proven it true.

Lack of the same sex addicts to carry the message into facilities is a common problem, however, it can not be used as a justification for not following this guideline. Some members have taken matters into their own hands and have reported doing so without repercussions, but for others the repercussions have been traumatic. If we lose one addict or facility because of this practice, it is one too many. The reputation of Narcotics Anonymous, our members, and the people we serve depend on honoring this principle.

Just as we ask in our regular recovery meetings that men work with men and women work with women, we emphasize this in H&I work for many of the same reasons which range from explicit sexual behaviors or harassment to our perception of the opposite sex clouding our ability to hear the message being shared. People new to our fellowship often find it difficult to focus on recovery. We need not give them more reasons to lose their focus. Just as importantly we, as H&I members, should not place ourselves in situations that may become awkward for us. Even with the best of intentions we are only human and, therefore, fallible. By following this suggestion, we avoid the pitfalls associated with this issue.