

# Carrying the Message Into Adolescent Facilities

## H&I Service Bulletin # 6

### Carrying the Message Into Adolescent Facilities

Any addict on any H&I panel is qualified to speak at adolescent facilities. Whatever type of facility we are in, regardless of age, race or sexual identity the message is always the same. We carry a message of recovery from the disease of addiction through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous. We focus on our similarities, not our differences which are insignificant compared to our purpose. Just as addiction does not discriminate, our members learn to practice the spiritual principle of anonymity. All addicted persons seeking recovery are welcome in NA.

When we refer to adolescents, we are referring to anyone under the legal age of majority in your state or country. We need to remember that these adolescents are prospective members and should be treated with respect. Don't preach to or patronize them. Avoid saying things like "I feel like I am talking to my children." Validate their feelings and emotions. Situations created by peer pressure and conflicts with parents or teachers are just as stressful to adolescents as relationships or loss of a job is to an addict who may be older. We practice empathy and patience as we share the hope of recovery we have found. We believe that no addict anywhere need die without a chance to learn a better way of life. We should acknowledge their clean time and let them know there is fun in recovery. Share about activities and other positive experiences such as friendships you have formed in the fellowship.

Don't compare your bottom to theirs or use profanity. They may not have been exposed to many behaviors common to our illness, and we do not want to expose them unnecessarily. Familiarizing yourself with the do's and don'ts in our handbook will help in this area.

Regarding our relationship with adolescent facilities, we need to be especially aware of their rules and regulations as they relate to our interaction with their residents. For example, some facilities may require a staff member to be present during meetings. We have also found that if attendance at our meetings is voluntary it will reduce distractions and increase the opportunity for recovery. All meetings should be structured toward recovery.

When you share your experience, strength and hope with adolescents you are speaking to potential NA members. In our experience, just as you don't need an ex-offender to carry the message into a prison, it is not necessary to be an adolescent to carry the message into an adolescent unit.