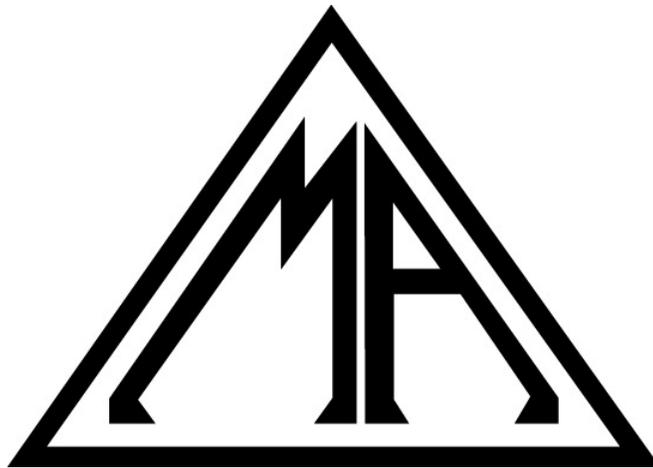


# Hospitals & Institutions Handbook

**Suggested Guidelines, Potentially Asked Questions,  
Meeting Formats & Readings**



*When anyone, anywhere,  
reaches out for help,  
I want the hand of MA to be there;  
and for that, I am responsible!*

Contact the MA World Services H&I Trustee for further assistance and guidance:  
[hospitalsandinstitutions@marijuana-anonymous.org](mailto:hospitalsandinstitutions@marijuana-anonymous.org)

## Introduction

Hospitals & Institutions (H&I) 12th Step work typically involves carrying the message of Marijuana Anonymous to the marijuana addict who is in treatment or confined, and may have no other way of hearing our message. Each H&I committee is autonomous and may find that their area of service differs according to their situation - H&I can carry MA's message to treatment centers, recovery houses, mental health facilities, chemical dependency units, prisons, or other institutions. The activities of all H&I committees are based on, and governed by, the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts for Service of MA.

This handbook serves as a guideline to all H&I committees throughout MA, and offers support to MA members interested in this type of rewarding service. Whether at the group, region, or district level, H&I service is a responsibility that has many facets, to which the most important are:

- The patients, inmates, or groups within a facility, or whomever might be addressed during an H&I meeting.
- The hospital or institution visited, showing courtesy and compliance with its policies, ever conscious of our 6th Tradition of cooperation rather than affiliation.
- The fellowship of Marijuana Anonymous, conducting ourselves in a respectful manner and being mindful that we are viewed as representatives of MA.

The most common type of H&I service carried into a facility is a Panel Meeting. This is when an appointed Secretary will invite two or three MA members to share in front of participants who attend or live at a facility. Usually, after the speakers have addressed the audience, the Secretary opens the meeting for sharing and/or Q&A. Variations on this format could include meetings that have one speaker, discuss a topic, study one of the 12 Steps, or incorporate meditation.

H&I service is an opportunity for us to practice Step 12, and to embody the MA Traditions. We are both privileged and responsible to be of service in this way.

## Setting up and Working in an H&I committee

Talk to fellow group members and at District/Region meetings to find others who may be interested in participating. Some suggestions are:

- Compile a list of willing members to participate on H&I panels
- Prepare H&I volunteers by circulating this handbook
- Research the community for appropriate facilities, asking if they are visited by 12-Step fellowships and are accustomed to this type of service
- Understand each facility's clearance requirements, which may include fingerprinting, TB testing, etc., as well as rules and regulations inside the facility such as banned items
- Consider a budget for gifting Life with Hope books and other literature
- Ask home groups to pass the 7th Tradition basket a second time to fund H&I work
- Contact other local 12-Step fellowships to learn if they conduct H&I meetings
- Begin with one commitment which can be maintained successfully before taking on additional commitments
- Discuss feedback from Secretaries and Speakers to evaluate whether any aspects of Panel Meetings might be improved upon
- Reach out to the World Services H&I Committee, or connect with other H&I service groups directly to hear other experiences

## Positions & Responsibilities

**H&I Chair:** The H&I chairperson is elected by the local District/Region Service Committee. A suggested term of service is one year.

**Qualifications:** It is suggested the chairperson have a minimum of one year of continuous sobriety (defined as abstinence from marijuana and all other self-prescribed mind-altering substances, including alcohol). It is also preferable to have had six months of committee experience.

**Responsibilities:**

- Coordinate all H&I activities in the district/region
- Maintain communication with the World Services H&I Trustee and acting as liaison for the committee
- Conduct regular committee meetings and being responsible for understanding the H&I Handbook
- Hold orientation meetings for interested Panel Secretaries and speakers
- Report feedback about Panels at district/region meetings
- Provide service sponsorship for future Chairpersons

**Panel Secretaries (Facility Correspondents):** Panel Secretaries are selected by the District/Regional service committee's H&I Chair, or agreed upon by the H&I committee. There is no specific length of service required.

**Qualifications:** It is suggested that Secretaries have a minimum of one year of continuous sobriety (defined above). In addition, it is preferable to have six months of prior H&I service experience.

**Responsibilities:**

- Lead Panel Meetings at appointed times
- Be familiar with facilities' rules pertaining to visitors
- Brief speakers regarding rules, regulations, and Panel specific details (time limits for shares, etc.)
- Act as the first point of contact for the facility on the day of the Panel Meeting
- Lead discussion after Panel Meetings to review what worked
- Share feedback, issues, and attendance numbers with the H&I Chair
- Suggest a replacement if unable to fill the service commitment for any reason
- Provide service sponsorship for future Secretaries

**Speakers:** Speakers are selected by Panel Secretaries. There is no specific length of service required.

**Qualifications:** It is suggested that Speakers have a minimum of six months of continuous sobriety (defined above).

**Responsibilities:**

- Arrive promptly prior to the start of the Panel Meeting
- Share experience, strength, and hope

## General Guidance and Information

- Think carefully before making an H&I commitment, as this service requires a high level of responsibility
- Members should consider whether volunteering at a facility might be triggering if they have been institutionalized
- If an institution reaches out to a group that does not have an active H&I committee, refer its staff to the World Services H&I Trustee
- Follow a facility's guidelines regarding distribution of literature
- Bring only as much literature as will be used to the facility, as extras could be discarded (PDFs are also available on the MA website for staff)
- Let MA's literature carry the message on topics such as CBD use and our theory that marijuana can be addictive
- Become familiar with Potentially Asked Questions (PAQ) at the end of this handbook, and be prepared with answers before a panel
- Be mindful that participants may not be familiar with how 12-Step meetings work
- Check with staff to confirm if using prayer during a Panel meeting is acceptable
- Ask people to introduce themselves/share before or after the meeting to avoid breaking the flow of the panel (consider including a Q&A at the end of a panel, if at all)
- Be clear with an audience that Panel members are not employed with the institution
- Share honestly about experience, strength and hope, using polite language and humor
- Refrain from endorsing any specific religion
- Panel members who share experience about their mental illness, time in prison, sexual acting out, violence, developmental or family issues, can help appropriate audiences relate
- Avoid expressing opinions about staff, an institution's policies, or treatment being provided, as well as outside issues like marijuana legalization
- Decline to serve as a go-between for patients/inmates to anyone outside the facility
- If an H&I meeting becomes an independent meeting, then an H&I committee, or MA World Services can provide ongoing support

## Potentially Asked Questions (PAQs)

The following questions may be asked by panel attendees:

### 1. Is marijuana addictive, or even harmful?

Yes, for some people. Our pamphlets "A Doctor's Opinion about Marijuana Addiction," "Stories by Teens," and "Sharing Our Experience, Strength, and Hope," plus personal stories in our basic text *Life with Hope* are all examples of literature describing the addictive/harmful effects of marijuana use.

### 2. What is MA's opinion on marijuana legalization or medical marijuana?

Our Tenth Tradition clearly states, "Marijuana Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the MA name ought never be drawn into public controversy." People are entitled to have personal opinions, but these are both considered outside issues for MA.

### 3. How can I find MA meetings outside this facility?

A meeting directory can be found at our website, including in-person, online, and telephone meeting information. We also have a phone number to call or text: (800) 766-6779.

### 4. How can I get MA literature?

Our books, workbooks, and newsletter subscriptions can be purchased at the A New Leaf Publications website. Various pamphlets are on our website and mobile app. MA's basic text *Life with Hope* includes our 12 Steps & 12 Traditions, as well as members' personal stories.

### 5. Is someone still using drugs welcome at MA meetings?

Yes. MA's Third Tradition states, "The only requirement for membership in Marijuana Anonymous is a desire to stop using marijuana." We know that struggling with addiction is a part of the recovery process. Many of our members came to meetings while still using marijuana and today they are clean and recovering. If a member is still using, they may be asked to just listen during a meeting. Attendees are encouraged to speak with members before or after the meeting.

### 6. Is someone on prescribed medications welcome at MA meetings?

Yes. We are not recovery professionals, and have no opinion on medications prescribed by a doctor. Some of our members also have mental or physical disorders requiring medication and work a recovery program successfully.

### 7. How does MA define sobriety/abstinence?

Many of us have found that the only way that we can keep our sobriety is to abstain from all mind and mood altering chemicals, including alcohol.

### 8. What is the difference between AA, NA, and MA?

Much like AA, which has the primary purpose to help the alcoholic, MA exists to help the marijuana addict who still suffers. All 12 Step programs are based on AA's Twelve Steps and Traditions.

### 9. Is MA associated with any religion?

No. MA does not oppose or endorse any religion. Our program is based on spiritual principles that any member can relate to, and finding a "Higher Power" (used interchangeably with "God" in our literature) is a personal decision for every member to make. Some members are religious, some are atheist or agnostic, and all are welcome.

## PAQs continued

The following questions may be asked by professionals in the community:

### 1. What happens at an H&I panel?

Panels of two or more MA members share their experience about marijuana addiction and recovery, and may offer a Q&A session afterwards.

### 2. Why should I consider an MA panel at my facility?

Individuals who struggle with marijuana addiction frequently identify with MA members, relating to our stories about compulsive marijuana use. The tools of our program provide a clear path to recovery. Some people experiencing co-occurring disorders may benefit from 12-Step recovery in addition to medical treatment.

### 3. Does MA offer 'classes' on marijuana addiction?

No. MA holds meetings and offers literature on addiction and recovery. At meetings, members offer each other support by sharing how they manage life without returning to marijuana.

### 4. How do I get more information and/or schedule a panel?

Our website [www.marijuana-anonymous.org](http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org) has pamphlets useful to professionals which can be downloaded and printed. Email [hospitalsandinstitutions@marijuana-anonymous.org](mailto:hospitalsandinstitutions@marijuana-anonymous.org) to schedule a panel.

### 5. May I start an MA meeting at my facility?

Yes, sometimes an institutional meeting is started by professionals in which they facilitate the MA meeting. Sometimes institutional meetings become regular meetings when meeting members take over facilitating and opening it to the public. Meetings may remain housed at the facility, but are self-supporting and listed at the World Services and/or a local MA website. If a meeting cannot be turned over to its members, it will not be listed publicly on an MA website.

When a professional agency assists in the formation of an MA meeting, it is important that the meeting's activities be kept separate from the agency and its programs.

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These suggested answers provide guidance in keeping with MA's Traditions. Other valuable resources include the "[Why H&I Panels?](#)" and "[A Doctor's Opinion about Marijuana Addiction](#)" pamphlets.

## Meeting Formats

This is a suggested meeting format, followed by options for different settings. Use any format according to group conscience, keeping the Twelve Traditions in mind.

### Basic Script:

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a marijuana addict. [**Optional opening prayer/words**]

Thank you for attending this [*meeting/panel*] of Marijuana Anonymous. In a moment we will have some readings, followed by [*describe meeting type chosen from below*].

Marijuana Anonymous is a fellowship of people who share our experience, strength and hope with each other that we may solve our common problem and help others to recover from marijuana addiction. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using marijuana. There are no dues or fees for membership. We are self-supporting through our own contributions. MA is not affiliated with any religious or secular institution or organization, and has no opinion on any outside controversies or causes. Our primary purpose is to stay free of marijuana and to help the marijuana addict who still suffers achieve the same freedom. We can do this by practicing our suggested Twelve Steps of recovery and by being guided as a group by our Twelve Traditions.

May I have a volunteer to read [*suggestions*]:

- Who is a Marijuana Addict?
- The 12 Questions
- How It Works
- Dangers of Cross Addiction

Now, our MA members will introduce themselves. Please tell us your name, and how long you have been clean and sober.

**OPTION A - Panel Meeting:** We will now share our stories. [*Optional: After shares, staff or MA members may ask participants for shares/questions*]

**OPTION B - Single Speaker Meeting:** [*Speaker*] will now share their experience, strength and hope with us for \_\_\_ minutes. [*Optional: After speaker, staff or MA members may ask participants for shares/questions*]

### Possible 'crosstalk' statements:

- In MA, we speak about our own experiences and feelings. However, it is alright to comment on the speaker's share or what others have said in a supportive way.
- In MA, we speak about our own experiences and feelings. We do not crosstalk. Crosstalk is defined as any interruption of a share or directing comments to a specific individual. However, it is alright to comment on the speaker's share.

### If asking for sharing/questions:

- The meeting is now open for sharing on [**speakers' names**] stories. Share on anything you could relate to, and please don't interrupt anyone else.
- The meeting is now open for questions on [**speakers' names**] stories. Please limit your questions to the topic of marijuana addiction.

[**After Q&A/sharing**] Our time is up for now. May I have a volunteer to read 'Our Awakening'?

Thank you to all who attended, [**hosting facility**], and our MA members who spoke.

[**Optional**] If you didn't get to share, or want to ask us any questions, please speak to us after the meeting.

We will now close the meeting with [**closing prayer/words**].

# Who Is A Marijuana Addict?

We who are marijuana addicts know the answer to this question. Marijuana controls our lives!

We lose interest in all else; our dreams go up in smoke. Ours is a progressive illness often leading us to addictions to other drugs, including alcohol.

Our lives, our thinking, and our desires center around marijuana - scoring it, dealing it, and finding ways to stay high.

# The Twelve Questions of Marijuana Anonymous

The following questions may help you determine whether marijuana is a problem in your life.

1. Has smoking pot stopped being fun?
2. Do you ever get high alone?
3. Is it hard for you to imagine a life without marijuana?
4. Do you find that your friends are determined by your marijuana use?
5. Do you use marijuana to avoid dealing with your problems?
6. Do you smoke pot to cope with your feelings?
7. Does your marijuana use let you live in a privately defined world?
8. Have you ever failed to keep promises you made about cutting down or controlling your use of marijuana?
9. Has your use of marijuana caused problems with memory, concentration, or motivation?
10. When your stash is nearly empty, do you feel anxious or worried about how to get more?
11. Do you plan your life around your marijuana use?
12. Have friends or relatives ever complained that your using is damaging your relationship with them?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, you may have a problem with marijuana.

# How It Works

The practice of rigorous honesty, of opening our hearts and minds, and the willingness to go to any lengths to have a spiritual awakening are essential to our recovery.

Our old ideas and ways of life no longer work for us. Our suffering shows us that we need to let go absolutely. We surrender ourselves to a Power greater than ourselves.

Here are the steps we take which are suggested for recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over marijuana, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to marijuana addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Do not be discouraged; none of us are saints. Our program is not easy, but it is simple. We strive for progress, not perfection. Our experiences, before and after we entered recovery, teach us three important ideas:

- That we are marijuana addicts and cannot manage our own lives;
- That probably no human power can relieve our addiction; and
- That our Higher Power can and will if sought.

## **Dangers of Cross Addiction**

As stated in our third tradition, the only requirement for membership in Marijuana Anonymous is a desire to stop using marijuana. There is no mention of any other drugs or alcohol. This is to adhere to the "singleness of purpose" concept, but many of us have found that the only way that we can keep our sobriety is to abstain from all mind and mood altering chemicals, including alcohol.

When we give up the drug of our choice, a void is created. The initial struggle to abstain from marijuana use often leaves us vulnerable. To fill this void we may start to use, or increase the use of, other substances such as alcohol, cocaine, pills, or other self-prescribed drugs. Although we may not now be addicted to these substances, their use can lower our inhibitions, leaving us open to repeating old patterns of thinking and behaving that can lead back to marijuana use. The fact that we became addicted to marijuana reflects a tendency towards behavior that may lead to cross addiction or substitution addiction to these substances.

To reiterate, the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using marijuana. It is important, however, to recognize the potential to create one problem as we strive to recover from another.

## OUR AWAKENING

Our awakening has come about as a result of a spiritual house cleaning, being aware of who we are, and cultivating a growing relationship with our Higher Power. That relationship can lessen the role of fear as the main source of motivation in our lives. We know that our needs will be met-perhaps not in the ways that we had hoped for, but in ways from which we can truly grow. We have found that freedom from fear is much more important than freedom from want. We start to accept the unpleasantness in our lives and become grateful when we are able to experience growth from it.

We learn to give without expecting rewards. We act as responsible members of society, living not in isolation but with a sense of community. We become true partners with our friends and loved ones. With the help of a Higher Power, we respond positively to adversity. Practicing the principles we learn by taking the Twelve Steps produces rewards beyond calculation. With a deep sense of gratitude and the help of a power greater than ourselves, we can live in spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery; we live with serenity and security, one day at a time. Humbly seeking to do the will of a Higher Power, we find that we can now live useful lives. As a result, we reap benefits we had thought unattainable, even unimaginable.

As we each work the program in our own special way, we discover the spiritual principles that we all have in common. We are all unique examples of how the program works, each of us with our distinct gifts to share. We take these steps for ourselves, not by ourselves. Others have gone before; others will follow. We recover.