



# Outreach Handbook

Provided by the  
**World Services Outreach Committee**

June, 2022

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## FOREWORD

From the very first moments that marijuana addicts started to come together, the need for outreach was born. Outreach service exists at all levels of Marijuana Anonymous. When we travel to meetings in nearby cities or states, when we answer our District phone lines and web inquiries, when we make ourselves available to the still suffering addicts or their family members in our local communities, we are doing outreach service work.

Outreach is about *overcoming isolation*. Isolation comes in many forms: long distances, natural obstacles, cultural differences, prison walls, and such. Public Information (PI) addresses those outside our fellowship, and Hospitals & Institutions (H&I) brings our message to addicts seeking recovery “on the inside” -- in hospitals, prisons, sober living homes, etc. Outreach work fosters communication, unity, participation, and hope *between* MA members.

This handbook is a compilation of recommended Outreach committee practices and available information. The purpose is simple: to ensure that any individual, meeting, Region, or District can be connected to the MA service structure. Members are supported in fulfilling our primary purpose -- sharing our experience, strength, and hope with each other that we may solve our common problem and help others to recover from marijuana addiction.

It is in the spirit of service that we present this body of work to the MA Fellowship.

- The MA World Services Outreach Committee

## **An Overview of Outreach Service Work**

The goals of Outreach service are to assist groups in solving problems that may impede their growth, or threaten their survival, and to help groups overcome many kinds of isolation. We do this by encouraging increased contact, knowledge, and exposure to other MA members, and to the MA service structure. The fundamental approach in Outreach efforts is to help members to help themselves.

Outreach service is meant to complement rather than duplicate the activities of any existing service committee. PI committees convey MA information to the general public, including the media. H&I committees bring panels or meetings to marijuana addicts who are in treatment or confined to prisons. While PI and H&I service work focuses on helping the marijuana addict not currently part of MA, Outreach focuses on supporting MA members to build fellowship and camaraderie. The activities of existing District, Region, or meeting subcommittees vary widely, each one tailored to the needs of those it serves. There are, however, common themes and tasks shared by many who participate in Outreach efforts. While none do all, most Outreach subcommittees do perform some of the following functions:

- ❖ Provide a direct line of communication to remote members
- ❖ Present or take part in activities designed to bring members together
- ❖ Assist groups in need of support
- ❖ Encourage members to be involved in MA service
- ❖ Send out local area meeting information to new meetings and individuals
- ❖ Encourage new meetings to register with World Services
- ❖ Answer area helplines or emailed requests for support
- ❖ Foster nearby meeting growth
- ❖ Share experience with Regions becoming Districts
- ❖ Collaborate with PI and H&I subcommittees
- ❖ Connect members or groups to MA resources
- ❖ Participate on the World Services Outreach Committee

Outreach is not intended to be a service that starts new meetings. Instead, we connect and support members to start and maintain their own meetings. This is done by sharing information and resources about the program of MA, and fostering member access to the MA service structure. Assisting groups in need of support, helping Group Service Representatives (GSRs) to attend District Service Committee (DSC) meetings, and helping new groups join DSC structures are all part of serving our local communities.

Some factors that contribute to members being detached from the service structure are geographic, language, or cultural barriers. One of our main goals is to bring lone members together with other parts of MA. These services can include facilitating correspondence, coordination of long distance travel to support remote members or groups, maintaining contact information, helping to plan activities for those who could not otherwise come together, and submitting information to World Services newsletters. Service work focused on understanding differing cultural practices can also be helpful in connecting with marijuana addicts from various backgrounds.

In 2020, MA World Services' Outreach Committee formed a Representation and Accessibility (R&A) subcommittee. Forming an R&A subcommittee of your own can clarify and center topics like visibility, safety, equity, access, and upholding the spirit of the MA Traditions. This subcommittee works so that communities might feel some liberation from feelings of exclusion which damage their recovery and emotional sobriety. Everyone should feel welcome and able to get involved on meeting, Region, and District levels if they wish to be of service. It is important to not only talk about these issues, but to actively work on them with actions that support all currently underrepresented or marginalized identities.

## **Cooperation with Hospitals & Institutions (H&I) and Public Information (PI)**

Outreach provides assistance to new or struggling members who were first contacted through H&I and PI efforts. For example, H&I carries MA meetings into certain institutions utilizing a speaker panel format. These are classified as H&I meetings. When patients or inmates choose to hold their own regularly scheduled MA meeting in addition to the H&I provided panel, this is an institutional group. Though it is not an H&I panel, H&I usually informs the Outreach subcommittee that this type of meeting has started. Outreach can provide information, guidance, literature, and communication to these institutional groups.

PI carries the MA message to members of the general public who may be struggling with marijuana addiction. The result is newly recovering marijuana addicts who choose to become members of MA. Since PI work is mostly focused towards the public who are not members of our fellowship, it is Outreach that provides ongoing assistance to MA members and groups which are not part of a District or Region. Cooperation with H&I and PI is necessary for any Outreach effort to be helpful to the service committee it serves and the marijuana addicts being supported.

Service committees can be limited by human and financial resources. Such constraints can result in a lack of basic communication and support to MA members and groups. Sometimes, the most meaningful Outreach work is to encourage members of MA to get involved in a local service subcommittee. All MA members can benefit from increased participation.

As a resource, Outreach can be regarded as a source in helping the Fellowship through the many paths of service. Many times, we find that groups cannot find the information they need and they connect with the Outreach subcommittee to help establish contacts with service bodies throughout the Fellowship. Outreach members should be comfortable with locating information in the MA Service Manual.

## **Creating an Outreach Committee**

The following outline is general in nature and suggests a starting point in surveying the need of Outreach in your District or Region. You can utilize this Outreach Handbook, seek guidance from nearby established District Outreach subcommittees, or connect with the MA World Services Outreach Committee. You may want to ask:

1. Are there members or groups who are cut off in any way? Does confusion at DSC/RSC or subcommittee meetings, or among Correspondence volunteers, suggest that some members and groups want to be more involved than they know how to be?

2. If a need is expressed, would Outreach address such concerns? Are volunteers and financial resources available?

With support from your District, form an Outreach subcommittee. Set a regular time and place for the meeting and have this Outreach Handbook available.

- ❖ At your first meeting, choose a chairperson to represent the committee at DSC meetings. A chairperson should have a suggested 6 months clean and sober time and a desire to commit to the position for at least 6 months.
- ❖ Request contact information for all meetings in your District/Region, especially Group Service Representatives (GSRs), from the DSC/RSC secretary.
- ❖ Once communication has been established with meetings, assign tasks to address various needs that meetings may have.
- ❖ Report progress and problems at each regularly scheduled DSC/RSC meeting.
- ❖ Maintain communication with the World Services Outreach Committee and share success stories and/or materials so others may borrow from your experience.
- ❖ Present information to members to encourage participation in an Outreach subcommittee, then bring the results to the DSC/RSC meeting.

Taking the time to engage GSRs and their meeting members to participate can promote success for that meeting/group, provide them with a connection to the District/Region and World Services, and ultimately grow your committee. Announcements can be made when visiting each meeting, focusing on the practical aspects of activities and growing connections between meetings in the District/Region. Any information shared should stay within the MA Traditions.

## **Doing the Work**

One way your committee can perform Outreach and provide information about the committee is by visiting groups, which can be done in teams. Prioritize visiting groups that are known to be struggling or are not represented at the DSC/RSC.

While visiting groups, teams can provide information to trusted servants and other group members about:

- ❖ Fundraising and fellowship
- ❖ Growing attendance at smaller meetings
- ❖ Other District/Region subcommittee's activities
- ❖ Best practices from other meetings
- ❖ Registering with MA World Services

It is important in Outreach visits to remain respectful of the autonomy of each group and to not disrupt the normal flow of the meeting. If the meeting wishes to be listed with MA World Services, they can fill out the "List a New Meeting" form at the World Services website.

## **STARTER KITS & OTHER MATERIALS FOR NEW GROUPS**

The Outreach committee can offer resources like books, pamphlets, and sobriety chips. Familiarizing yourself with available resources on the World Services website, A New Leaf

Publications (ANLP) website, and sobriety chip suppliers will help you provide assistance to meetings in your District/Region. Your DSC/RSC can share the New Meeting Starter Kit with a new meeting by ordering a pre-printed copy from the ANLP website, or show a meeting how to request the printable files from the World Services website.

## **GROUP SUPPORT**

In addition to visiting groups, providing New Meeting Starter Kits, and providing other materials, Outreach can support meetings through District/Region-wide announcements and by helping meetings post flyers in their local communities. Outreach can also ensure that the group is listed on a DSC/RSC meeting list and is registered with World Services. In Districts/Regions with their own website, Outreach might provide information like “Groups Needing Support.” Other examples are being knowledgeable of World Services’ resources, answering procedural questions that come up, and training members of a new group on how to perform service positions like being chairperson, treasurer, etc.

## **ADDITIONAL NEEDS**

When a meeting starts, or an existing meeting grows, additional needs may arise. Your committee should be prepared to provide support to ensure that meetings are welcoming to all addicts and address any representation and accessibility concerns that persons attending may have.

Support can include, but is not limited to:

- ❖ Helping find meeting locations accessible to those with physical disabilities (i.e. wheelchair access)
- ❖ Use of assistive technology in virtual meetings (i.e closed captioning)
- ❖ Providing pamphlets in languages other than English
- ❖ Connecting members who feel isolated or underrepresented with fellow addicts who identify similarly

If you have questions relating to these special needs, please reach out to the MA World Services Representation & Accessibility subcommittee at [randa@marijuana-anonymous.org](mailto:randa@marijuana-anonymous.org).

## **Conclusion**

Our experience indicates that community outreach is a key to our fellowship's unity and strength. MA World Services Outreach Committee aims to foster outreach at the District, Region, and independent meeting level, including internationally. By offering to serve others within the fellowship service structure, the World Services Outreach Committee hopes you will help provide an educated approach for marijuana addicts to support each other. Outreach committees work to promote growth and unity by bringing a variety of groups into contact with each other, allowing new and existing elements of the fellowship to benefit from shared experiences.