**NORTH COUNTY AREA INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE (NC H&I)**

**GUIDE FOR AN IDEAL PANEL**

**Vision:** The vision of this guide is to aid NC H&I Panel Coordinators, Panel Leaders and Co-Leaders when providing meetings to our facilities. It includes detailed information on what an **IDEAL PANEL** consists of and how each panel can perform their purpose of Carrying the Message.

**Definitions:**

* **Treatment Chairperson Overview:** The Treatment Chairperson is the elected committee member who is the central point of contact for all facilities where we provide NC H&I Panels. This includes the coordination of Literature needs and Panel assignments. They will also coordinate on-going communication with Facility Staff, Panel Coordinators, Panel Leaders, Co-Leaders and Members to ensure all obligations are being met and any issues or concerns needing attention are addressed.
* **Facility Champion Overview:** Facility Champions are elected committee members who support the Treatment Chairperson. They are responsible for the day-to-day contact with their assigned facilities, and working with the Panel Coordinator to make sure the facility has complete staffing for panels and literature is provided. Any panel changes will be reported to the Treatment Chairperson and Database Coordinator to ensure we have updated information and continuity. If the Treatment Chairperson isn’t available, the NC H&I Chairperson should be contacted to intervene and assist in any issues or updates to the database.
* **Panel Coordinator Overview**: Attends the NC H&I Business meetings as scheduled, selects Panel Leaders, orders literature, and provides the monthly Panel Coordinator report to their Facility Champion. Sobriety requirement is one year of continuous sobriety.
* **Panel Leader Overview**: Responsible for leading an A.A. meeting at the assigned facility and ensures the facility does not experience a dark night (when a scheduled meeting does not occur). Completes NC H&I orientation, adheres to all NC H&I guidelines, and meets facility security requirements. Recruits, trains and schedules A.A. members to join as a Panel Member. Reports panel activity, Panel Member information and literature requirements to Panel Coordinator. Sobriety requirement is one year of continuous sobriety.
* **Co-Leader Overview**: Co-Leader is a regular member of a Panel who; assists the Panel Leader with their duties and responsibilities to ensure continuity. The Co-Leader can be given the opportunity to lead the H&I Panel and be prepared to jump in as a Leader if the current Leader has a scheduling conflict.
* **Panel Member Overview**: Attends the NC H&I panel as scheduled, and notifies Panel Leader if unable to attend. Completes NC H&I orientation, adheres to all NC H&I guidelines, and meets facility security requirements. All Panel Members should go through the NC H&I Orientation. But the Panel Leader can perform a quick overview of the duties and responsibilities of the panel and the facility requirements to aid in the continuity of the panel. The Panel Member should have six months of continuous sobriety.
* **Panel Visitor Overview:** Attends the NC H&I panel as scheduled, and notifies Panel Leader if unable to attend. Adheres to all NC H&I guidelines, and meets facility security requirements. All Panel Visitors should go through the NC H&I Orientation. But the Panel Leader can perform a quick overview of the duties and responsibilities of the panel and the facility requirements to aid in the continuity of the panel. Sobriety requirement is six months of continuous sobriety.
* **Panel Guest Overview:** A guest may attend a particular panel in a facility at the discretion of either the Panel Leader or the Panel Coordinator. All guests must adhere to the rules of the institution of which they are a guest. All Panel Members should go through the NC H&I Orientation. The Panel Leader can perform a quick overview of the duties and responsibilities of the panel and the facility requirements to aid in the continuity of the panel. Sobriety requirement is three months of continuous sobriety.
* **Facility Rules and Regulations:** Keep in mind we are guests of the facilities. Panel Coordinators and Panel Leaders must be familiar with all the **Do’s and Don’ts** for their facility and pass that information along to all Panel Members, Vistors and Guests.
* **Facility Literature Needs:** Most NC H&I facilities have received literature in the past and may need replenishment of literature to continue their mission. When doing your panel assignment, always ask if the facility needs literature. If yes, contact your Panel Coordinator and/or Leader to ensure literature is ordered.

**Ideal Panel:** The ideal panel will consist of a Leader, Co-Leader and 2-3 Members/Visitors/Guests (maximum Panel size should not exceed 5, including the Leader***). Ideally, each Panel should have a Panel Co-Leader. It is beneficial for the*** ***Panel Leader to rotate meeting leader duties to allow each member an opportunity to learn and grow in the panel meeting process.*** ***This will allow a member to become comfortable in leading the meeting and become a future Panel Leader. Remember the goal of a Panel Leader and Co-Leader is to not have a “Dark Panel Meetings”. Having a stable panel members ensure “Dark Panel Meetings” doesn’t occur.***

**Typical Panel Meeting Discussion:** All panel meetings generally share their experience, strength and hope. Each Panel Member will disclose in a general way what it was like, what happened, and what it’s like now. We suggest minimizing your drunk-a-log, focusing on recovery, and how workings with a Sponsor and the A.A. Steps have aided you. Not all panels we bring in are for people new in recovery. Reference GSO Pamphlet P-16 “The A.A. Group” and GSO Pamphlet P-27 “A.A. in Treatment Facilities”.

**Panel Meeting Discussion Options:** Your panel is holding an A.A. meeting and requires identification of oneself as an alcoholic and a member of A.A. The Panel Coordinator working with the Panel Leader and Panel Co-Leader will determine the format(s) to be used for each meeting. NC H&I have provided suggested meeting formats which you can print from the NC Web Page: [www.nchandi.org](http://www.nchandi.org). . This format includes the following:

* Open with the Serenity Prayer
* A.A.
* Preamble
* Reading of Chapter 5 – “How it Works”
* Reading of the 12 Traditions
* Reading of Chapter 3 – “More about Alcoholism”
* Finish with the “Vision for You”
* Close with the Serenity Pray

Some panels change their format each week to keep the interest of the residences. Keep in mind the meeting format will be up to you as a Leader or Co-Leader to determine the meeting format based on the needs of the residences. Here are some subject areas that can aid in your efforts:

* Step Meeting
* Big Book Meeting
* Open Discussion Meeting

**Step Meeting:** Have a Panel Member, or better yet a resident (or residents), read Step 1, 2, or 3 from the 12x12, paragraph by paragraph, passing the book along from person to person. Then have Panel Members share about their identification with that step.

**Big Book Meeting:** Have a Panel Member, or better yet a resident (or residents), read a story (or chapter) from the Big Book, paragraph by paragraph, passing the book along from person to person. Then have Panel Members share about their identification with the story.

**Open Discussion Meeting:** Have a Panel Member, or better yet a resident (or residents), read a story from the Grapevine, Came to Believe or Living Sober, paragraph by paragraph, passing the book along from person to person. Then have Panel Members share about their identification with that reading.

**Example of a Meeting format held at the VA Hospital:** This format uses the suggested NC H&I Meeting format and includes the Panel Member readings and discussion questions. The goal is to get participation from the residents. The Leader or Co-Leader could have residences perform the readings if you that could help them.

**NORTH COUNTY H&I PANEL**

**Meeting Format:**

1. Good Evening: My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am an alcoholic.
2. After a moment of silence, will those who care to join us in the Serenity Prayer?
3. This is the regular A.A. meeting of the North County Area Institutions Committee of Alcoholics Anonymous at VA.
4. As Guests of the VA Hospital we must follow your rules. So if we’re doing something against the rules please let us know.
5. AA’s Preamble states:

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

I have asked\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to read the “12 Traditions”.

I have asked\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to read a portion of chapter3 “More about Alcoholism”.

* Panel Members introduction.
* Tonight’s Panel will be held as “Discussion Format Meeting”. Panel Members will read a portion from the Big Book then share on their experience with each topic. After each topic we’ll open to the floor with a short time for questions and discussion.
* The following are the topics for tonight’s meeting which will aid your understanding of how AA works and will help in your recovery:

**Meeting Agenda:**

* + Chapter 2 – “There is a Solution”
    - Q & A (Pause and ask questions and hold open discussion.)
      * What motivated you to surrender?
      * Can you live a life without drinking?
  + Chapter 5 – “How it Works”
    - Q & A (Pause and ask questions and hold open discussion.)
      * Working The Steps can open a new understanding of why you drank. Do you understand the importance of working the Steps?
  + Appendix II – “Spiritual Experience”
    - Q & A (Pause and ask questions and hold open discussion.)
      * A.A. isn’t a Religious Program it’s a Spiritual Program. Do you have any concerns or questions?

**Chapter 2 – There is a Solution**: **(Big Book Page 17 – 29) – Member reading and shares.**

We, of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, know thousands of men and women who were once just as hopeless as Bill Wilson. Nearly all have recovered. They have solved the drink problem.

We are average Americans. All sections of this country and many of its occupations are represented, as well as many political, economic, social, and religious backgrounds. We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table. Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined.

The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this Bi Book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism. An illness of this sort - and we have come to believe it an illness - involves those about us in a way no other human sickness can. If a person has cancer all are sorry for him and no one is angry or hurt. But not so with the alcoholic illness, for with it there goes annihilation of all the things worthwhile in life. It engulfs all whose lives touch the sufferer's. It brings misunderstanding, fierce resentment, financial insecurity, disgusted friends and employers, warped lives of blameless children, sad wives and parents - anyone can increase the list.

***But the ex-problem drinker who has found this solution, who is properly armed with facts about himself, can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours. Until such an understanding is reached, little or nothing can be accomplished.***

**Step 1 tells us: “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.” We had to surrender to get started.**

**Let me briefly tell you how I did it.**

**Chapter 5 – “How it Works” (Big Book – Page 58 – 71) – Member reading and shares.**

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it-then you are ready to take certain steps. Powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is one who has all power-that one is God. May you find Him now!

Many of us exclaimed, "What an order! I can't go through with it." Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after makes clear three pertinent ideas:

(a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.   
(b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.   
(c) That God could and would if He were sought.

**Let me tell you how the Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous has helped me.**

Step 1 - We admitted we were powerless over alcohol--that our lives had become unmanageable.

**Panel Member will share their experience on Step 1.**

Step 2 - Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

**Panel Member will share their experience on Step 2.**

Step 3 - Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God ***as we understood Him*. Panel Member will share their experience on Step 3.**

**Spiritual Experience: (Big Book – Appendix II - Page 567) – Member reading and shares.**

The terms “Spiritual Experience” and “Spiritual Awakening” are used many times in the Big Book which, upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms.

    Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous. In the first few chapters a number of sudden revolutionary changes are described. Though it was not our intention to create such an impression, many alcoholics have nevertheless concluded that in order to recover they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming “God-consciousness” followed at once by a vast change in feeling and outlook.

    Among our rapidly growing membership of thousands of alcoholics such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the “educational variety” because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself. He finally realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self-discipline. With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a ***Power Greater than themselves***.

    Most of us think this awareness of a Power Greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it “God-consciousness.”   
    Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.   
    We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. **Willingness, honesty and open mindedness** are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.   
    “There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation.”

**Let me tell you about my Spiritual Experience and how it helped me in recovery.**

**Leader Closing Remarks:**

In closing, we have AA pamphlets, schedules and books available for you to keep. (Optional: Unfortunately we are not permitted to provide you our personal phone numbers, but you may always call Alcoholics Anonymous hotline to speak to another alcoholic. We may provide you with a schedule and acknowledge specific meetings we as individuals attend.)

Also, on behalf of the Contact on Release Committee we have fliers and the request form for their services. The primary purpose of AA Contact Service is to introduce newly released members to AA on the outside. Being alcoholics ourselves, we know that the people you will meet in your first days out could make all the difference. If you are interested in an AA contact upon your release, fill out and mail the request form to the PO Box. A member of AA will be in touch with you.

I have asked\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to read a portion of chapter 11 “A Vision for You”.

Thank you for your participation in our meeting.

Let’s circle up for a closing Serenity Pray.