

Suggested Guidelines for Helplines/Hotlines

We're glad you're here because it means you've chosen to be of service working the C.A. helpline. It is one of the most important commitments a C.A. member can make.

As helpline volunteers, we represent Cocaine Anonymous. We are a direct link to the public, and are quite often the first impression that a practicing addict will have of our Fellowship. Therefore, the sound of our voice, our attitude, our helpfulness and our courtesy—or lack thereof—could have a profound or devastating effect on the caller. We cannot overemphasize that fact. Understanding and a sincere desire to help are our principles and guidelines, and we should always be guided by the Twelve Traditions.

The C.A. helpline can literally save the life of the person on the other end of the line.

As a phone volunteer, you are an indispensable part of the C.A. program. At the same time, please bear in mind that NO ONE CAN SPEAK FOR C.A. We share only from our own experience and recovery.

WE ARE NOT COUNSELORS, AND WE ARE NOT QUALIFIED TO ADVISE CALLERS TO TAKE ANY ACTION EXCEPT TO SUGGEST:

1. Stop using
2. Get them to a Meeting
 - A. Familiarize yourself with dates/times of meetings in your area.
 - B. Use the ca-scta.org website to find a meeting
 - C. Download and install the C.A. MeetingFinder app from apple store or google play

REMEMBER, THE PHONE VOLUNTEER'S PRIMARY PURPOSE IS TO HELP THE ADDICT WHO IS STILL SUFFERING. OUR MAJOR OBJECTIVE IS TO SIMPLY GET THE NEWCOMER TO A C.A. MEETING. FOR THIS REASON, THE MEETING LIST IS OUR GREATEST TOOL.

Types of Phone Systems

Many Areas of C.A. have adopted their own guidelines for establishing helplines. They have used answering services, answering machines, voice mailbox systems, cell phones and/or individual members of the Fellowship.

C.A. SCTA Uses A Call Center Service Using Hotline Numbers:

1. Volunteers who agree to take calls are placed on an answering que.
2. If you cannot take a call when it comes in **DO NOT END/DECLINE CALL** just silence the ringer so that it can go to the next available volunteer.
3. The initial greeting may be, "Hello, may I help you?" It is not necessary to answer "Cocaine Anonymous."

Phone Volunteer Qualifications

Sobriety requirement: One-year continuous sobriety, and six-month commitment.

Phone volunteers need to go through an orientation on how to answer C.A. phone lines. Orientation entails training to work the phone. It is the only method we have to provide a standard of quality for the service we provide on the helpline. PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO ANSWER THE HELPLINE IF THEY HAVE NOT GONE THROUGH AN ORIENTATION.

Do:

- ☐ Remember to be polite, you may be the only contact the caller may have with C.A.
- ☐ Find out the needs of the caller.
- ☐ Share your experience, strength and hope.
- ☐ Encourage callers to attend meetings.
- ☐ Try to prevent keeping a caller on “hold” for too long.
- ☐ Refer calls for Public Information (i.e., requests for speakers, radio, TV, or literature) to the local PI Chairperson.
- ☐ Keep your calls short.
- ☐ Encourage the caller to call 911 if it’s an emergency or 988 if suicidal.
- ☐ Keep a log of all calls you receive and find out how they heard of C.A. if at all possible.

Don’t:

- ☐ Pick someone up at their home; agree to meet at a meeting or public facility. Phone volunteers are advised not to go to the home of an addict, even if it is just to take him/her to a meeting. Our Sixth Tradition states: “A C.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the C.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.”
- ☐ This is why C.A. phone volunteers MUST NOT recommend any outside treatment (i.e., hospitals, doctors, treatment centers, etc.). This especially includes referring a caller to any specific hospital, institution, doctor(s), treatment center, etc., with which the phone volunteer may have personal knowledge or experience.

· We NEVER give other members’ last names or phone numbers out over the phone—remember anonymity! Based on members’ previous experience, it is suggested that helpline volunteers do not give out their own last name or phone number. If you receive a request to speak to a particular person, tell the caller that you can only take a message, and then write it on a message pad or call the volunteer.

· Don’t try to persuade the caller to stop using drugs if they don’t want to. Do not label them as an addict or state that they have a problem. Stick to what you hear, how it was for you, and what you did about it. People can learn a lot by listening to your story. Their defenses could come up if you try to tell them their story.

- Do not engage in prolonged drug-a-logues or comparison studies of drug use. Share in a general way what it was like, what happened, and what it is like now.

- Do not use profanity.

- ☐ Don't feel you need to stay on the line with a caller who is in any way abusive or perverse, or who is quite simply too loaded to hear your part of the conversation.

We don't like to turn away from those in pain, but sometimes calls can be shocking and traumatic. Recovery teaches us to preserve our own sobriety, we must take care of ourselves first, and the helpline context is no exception. Reach out to another volunteer or Fellowship member if you are suffering from caller distress and give yourself permission to hang up promptly when a call is inappropriate. And if someone is too high to talk to right then, you can always say you want to talk with them, but they need to call you back when they are straight.

The Fifth Tradition states that: "Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the addict who still suffers." However, the best way to help a caller varies with each situation. Try to communicate that there is help and that they are not alone. Feel free to let them know about your background so they are more comfortable speaking freely with you. Remember, you are not responsible for the results of the call—you're only responsible for passing on the message of recovery and hope. The purpose of the helpline is to let people know C.A. exists and to help them get to a meeting.

WE ARE HERE TO LISTEN AND PROVIDE HOPE...