

OA GUIDELINES



Guidelines for Public Information Events

■ Purpose

Public information events are excellent ways of informing the public about our program of recovery.

■ Types of public information events

Newcomers' nights These are usually large, open OA meetings whose formats may vary to meet the needs of a particular audience. They commonly feature a question-and-answer period. A showing of an OA film may be included. OA literature is provided as handouts if possible. The focus is on people new to or interested in our program, whether potential members or not.

Young people's events Schools are the usual settings for these, whether an intimate classroom talk or an assembly. They commonly feature two or more speakers and follow a format similar to that of a newcomers' night, above. Another way to reach young people and teenagers is to participate in a school health fair. Many intergroups have display booths that can be used for this purpose. For information about participating in a health fair, see the *Guidelines for Health Fair Participation*.

Presentations to Employee Assistance Program (EAP) staff EAPs are counseling centers that some large companies employ to help workers deal with personal problems in a confidential setting. The professionals there are often quite receptive to hearing how OA can help their clients.

Other types of PI events There are many other settings for public information outreach. For more information about these, refer to the *Public Information Service Manual* and the *Hospitals, Institutions, Professionals and Military (HIPM) Service Manual*.

■ When to hold public information events

Anytime is a good time, but strategic times of year are: before the holidays; after New Year's (why not hold one in conjunction with OA's birthday, January 19?); or early spring, when bathing-suit season looms.

■ Preparation and planning (about three to four months prior)

Form a committee and choose a chairperson Encourage participation within your intergroup by enumerating specific tasks and the time commitment needed to accomplish them.

Select a site If your event will be in a school or institution, make sure the arrangements are made with the proper authorities. The site should be easily accessible, with well-lit parking. Besides schools and hospitals, libraries and churches are usually good locations.

Decide on format The format will determine your needs. How many will attend? (Chairs.) Will you have one speaker? A panel? (Needed: microphones, a podium, tables.) Will there be a “Q and A” session? (Paper, pencils.) Will you show a film? (Projector or VCR operator.) What special interests does the audience have? (Specific literature, topics.)

Inspect the site and ask questions Tell the facility’s manager what you’ll need and find out what’s available. Ask: Are there any fees? What about parking? What’s the maximum legal occupancy of the room? Will someone from the facility be there the day/night of the event?

■ **Materials** (about two to three months prior)

Order the literature and/or films We suggest that only OA Conference- or board-approved literature be used.

Suggested literature for newcomers’ nights

<i>About OA</i>	<i>OA is Not a Diet Club</i>
<i>A Program of Recovery</i>	<i>To the Newcomer</i>
<i>Fifteen Questions</i>	<i>To the Teen (flyer)</i>
<i>Many Symptoms, One Solution</i>	

Be sure to bring along local meeting directories. Remember: phone numbers are one of our most important public information resources. You may wish to bring along wallet cards with your local intergroup’s number. In addition, you might include back issues of *Lifeline* (available from the WSO); OA books such as *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, *Lifeline Sampler*, *Overeaters Anonymous* (the Brown Book); and OA catalogs. Depending on your audience, you might wish to order other specialized pamphlets.

Suggested literature for young people and teens

<i>Billy’s Story</i>	<i>The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous—A Kid’s View</i>
<i>Many Symptoms, One Solution</i>	
<i>To the Teen (flyer and brochure)</i>	

Also suggested: copies of *One Day . . . The Young People’s Way newsletter* and *To the Family of the Compulsive Overeater* (for parents and teachers). If possible, include lists of young people’s meetings and contact phone numbers.

Suggested literature for professionals

Introducing OA to Health Care Professionals Treatment and Beyond

You might also bring along back issues of *Lifeline* and suggest a subscription for their waiting rooms.

On using the OA film If you’ll be showing an OA film, make sure a minimum of two persons accompany it to coordinate the showing and safeguard the equip-

ment. One speaker might also set up and run the videotape recorder. Do a test run of the videotape and equipment while there's still time to fix any problems. (The OA film *OA—It Works* is available through the WSO.)

■ **Speakers** (about two to three months prior)

Choose speakers Speakers should be chosen carefully; they'll be representing the OA program and should have a good physical appearance reflecting physical and emotional well-being. You may wish to have abstinence requirements. Look for members who have suffered from different symptoms of the disease. Speakers should follow the guidelines for speakers outlined in the *Public Information Service Manual*.

Speaking to young people and teens Two speakers are preferred, since two stories provide more diversity. Two people can also answer questions more effectively. Each should share for fifteen minutes. Speakers should be the same age or just slightly older than those in the audience; one might be an anorexic or bulimic. They should focus on their teenage or younger years, and share personal problems and health risks of compulsive overeating.

Speaking to EAP professionals In the spirit of cooperation, not affiliation, tell them how helpful OA can be for their clients who struggle with eating disorders. Stress that we are not in competition with them, but an outside source of help.

For more detailed information on doing presentations to schools, professionals, or other special groups, see the *Public Information Service Manual* and the *Hospitals, Institutions, Professionals and Military (HIPM) Service Manual*.

■ **Publicity** (about two months prior)

Prepare 8-1/2" x 11" flyers Make these in time to be distributed four to six weeks prior to the event. These should contain: the event title; the sponsoring intergroup's name; event location; date; time; and contact phone number (no names). Flyers should make it clear that it's an event for the general public and not just for OA members. Suggested distribution sites: public health clinics, student health centers, exercise clubs, Y's, Twelve Step bookstores, doctors' and professional offices (obtain permission first), OA meetings. Provide plenty of extra flyers for OA meetings and urge members to take a few and post them on bulletin boards at their grocery store, laundromat, church, school, etc.

Get word out to the community Contact radio and TV stations and ask them to run public service announcements (PSAs). Tell them OA is a nonprofit organization. Make sure the PSAs include a local contact phone number. Also: local, regional, senior, school, and giveaway newspapers often have calendars of community events; send them announcements. (For sample PSA scripts and press releases, see the *Public Information Service Manual*; to purchase PSAs, contact the WSO.)

Inform the Fellowship Announce the event at all OA meetings, telling members of the planned content. Ask them to attend and bring a non-OA guest. List tasks for which volunteers are needed, and provide a contact name and number to call if interested in helping.

■ **Final preparations** (about one month prior)

Get firm commitments from volunteers and assign duties Areas include: registration table; literature; cleanup; door greeting; making and distributing ID badges; writing

and distributing flyers; decorating, if necessary; and making signs to direct participants to the right room. Call all volunteers and remind them of their commitment.

Checklist for one week prior to event

1. Call all volunteers again to verify their participation.
2. Wind up the publicity effort.
3. Make sure the facility is ready for you.
4. Give a flyer to the person answering the phone at the facility.

Arrive at least an hour before the event starts Allow time to set up, coordinate volunteers, and check the literature, registration, and refreshment tables.

■ **Follow-up**

Have a post-event meeting Evaluate what happened and come up with recommendations for the future. Also, send thank-you notes to those outside OA who helped, such as radio, TV, and facility personnel, etc. Retrieve recorded PSAs, if any, from TV and radio stations.

For more information on putting together public information events, consult the *Public Information Service Manual* and the *Hospitals, Institutions, Professionals and Military (HIPM) Service Manual*.

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Overeaters Anonymous®, Inc.
6075 Zenith Court NE
Rio Rancho, New Mexico 87144-6424 USA
Mail Address: PO Box 44020, Rio Rancho, NM 87174-4020 USA
Tel: 1-505-891-2664 FAX: 1-505-891-4320
E-mail: info@oa.org • Web site: www.oa.org

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