



**INMATE STEP WRITING  
CENTRAL ATLANTIC REGION OF NARCOTICS  
ANONYMOUS**



P. O. Box 1959 Chesterfield, VA 23832

**POLICY AND GUIDELINES**

**I. Dedication and purpose**

- a. The primary purpose of this committee is to provide written Narcotics Anonymous step guidance and correspondence to incarcerated addicts desiring recovery

**II. Guidelines for function**

- a. All letters are sent via the CARNA ISW PO Box with no personal last names, addresses, or phone numbers of step guides, committee members, or any one else given to step writers. These letters will be scanned upon receipt by web-based mail forwarding service. Digital copies of inmate correspondence will be forwarded to the Coordinating Secretary from this service. Step guides use pen names. Correspondence Only agreements with these signatures are filed with the ISW committee and the inmate step writer's facility.
- b. Step guides from the ISW Committee have an individual addict assigned in the order that the step guides have qualified and as addicts of the same sex become available. The Coordinating Secretary notifies the new step guide if they are not present at the meeting when their "turn" comes up. The step guides agree to have no prior knowledge of their assigned inmate step writer, and to respect the confidentiality of their assigned addict. They also agree to correspond through the ISW PO Box only after release.
- c. After the initial letter is read (anonymously) to the committee, all correspondence between step guide and step writer is confidential within the ISW committee. (Facilities may choose to read correspondence)
- d. All incoming and outgoing letters are logged by date with name, facility, and DOC identification number of the inmate step writer, and name, pen name, and phone number of the step guide by the Coordinating Secretary.
- e. No arrangements for rides, visits, loans, phone calls, materials for corresponding, photos, books\*, drawings, tapes, contacting family members or friends will be made between step guide and step writer. \*The step writer may request The Introductory Guide to Narcotics Anonymous in their first letter back to their new step guide. The Coordinating Secretary, upon step guide notification of the need, will then send the NA Step Guide book.
- f. The 12 Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous will be strictly upheld.
- g. All rules and regulations of the institution will be strictly upheld.
- h. Only women write to women, and only men write to men.
- i. At H&I commitments, the availability of ISW can be announced,



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including information that the committee meets monthly, and that informational cards will be available upon request of the addicts behind the walls.

- j. Informational cards will also be available for the prison addictions and volunteer services staff so that inmates who are unable to attend the H&I presentations can have equal access to ISW.
- k. Any addict behind the walls or anyone who thinks they may have a problem may write the ISW Committee as a whole with any questions or concerns at any time.
- l. Presentations to the fellowship and to facilities will include the ISW statement of dedication and purpose, as well as these guidelines for function.

**III. Voting and Operation Policy**

- a. ISW committee will act synonymously with the CARNA H&I Subcommittee.
- b. All motions, budgets, and general orders of business will be held within the CARNA H&I Sub-committee
- c. The ISW Chair shall report to the CARNA H&I Subcommittee, all business in writing at the bi-monthly CARNA H&I Subcommittee meeting.

**IV. How to Become A ISW Step Guide**

- a. Addicts will qualify and become an oriented VA DOC volunteer at the committee.
- b. They will discuss and be able to answer affirmatively all of the following questions.
  - i. Is your recovery based in Narcotics Anonymous?
  - ii. Have you done a 4th and 5th step?
  - iii. Do you work the steps in writing with an NA sponsor?
  - iv. Do you have at least 2 years clean time?
  - v. Do you attend NA step meetings regularly?
  - vi. Do you have a working knowledge of the 12 steps and 12 traditions of NA?
  - vii. Do you have experience as an NA sponsor?
  - viii. Do you have the means to provide stationery and stamps for regular correspondence?
  - ix. Do you have the willingness and availability to reply to any letter you receive within 2 weeks, and to notify the coordinating secretary each time?
  - x. Are you willing to sign and follow the NA ISW Correspondence Only agreement?
  - xi. Are you willing to attend at least one ISW Committee meeting or one ISW workshop per year?



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- c. Step guides will be assigned an inmate step writer in the order that they have qualified, and as addicts of the same sex become available. The Coordinating Secretary will notify the new step guide of their new inmate step writer.

**V. Clean time Guidelines**

- a. ISW step guide- 2 years
- b. Chair- 4 years
- c. Vice Chair- 2 years
- d. Coordinating Secretary- 2 years
- e. Assistant Coordinating Secretary- 18 months
- f. Recording Secretary – 1 year

**VI. Responsibilities of Trusted Servants**

- a. Chair
  - i. Minimum clean time requirement is 4 years
  - ii. Keeps order in the meeting
  - iii. Keeps discussion on the topic
  - iv. Prepares an agenda for each meeting
  - v. Ensures that the Traditions are upheld in all matters
  - vi. Maintains a link of communication between the ISW and CAR-NA H&I Subcommittee, including giving a bi-monthly report at that subcommittee meeting
  - vii. Attends each meeting of CAR-NA H&I Subcommittee.
  - viii. Keeps accurate record of funds received and spent
  - ix. Makes sure committee has a monthly meeting place
  - x. Maintains an ongoing file of all ISW minutes
- b. Vice Chair
  - i. Minimum clean time is 3 years
  - ii. Helps chairperson keep proceedings orderly
  - iii. Acts as chairperson in the case of chairperson's absence. Fills in for any other trusted servant position as necessary.
  - iv. If the office of chairperson becomes vacant, serves as chair until confirmed by the CAR-NA Service Committee or until a new chair is elected.
  - v. Attends all ISW AND CAR-NA Service Committee meetings.
- c. Coordinating Secretary
  - i. Minimum clean time is 2 years
  - ii. Attends monthly ISW meeting
  - iii. Is responsible for the extra Post Office Box Key
  - iv. To assure accountability, keeps a complete log of all ISW step guide/step writer communications (as described in Guidelines for Function # 4.) Keeps in phone contact with step guides if needed.



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- v. Mails Correspondence Only agreements to inmate's facility each time the step guide is assigned a new inmate step writer
- d. Recording Secretary
  - i. Minimum clean time is 1 year
  - ii. Attends monthly ISW meeting
  - iii. Takes an accurate set of minutes at each meeting and distributes them to subcommittee chair prior to the RSC (3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday on the odd numbered months), and to members prior to next meeting.
- e. Postal Facilitator
  - i. Minimum clean time is 3 years
  - ii. Attends monthly ISW meeting & reports on the details of the distribution of all letters received.
  - iii. Is responsible for one of the Post Office Box Keys
  - iv. Picks up ISW mail on a weekly basis and within 48 hours forwards all mail to the appropriate trusted servant(s)

**VII. Terms of Commitment**

- a. All trusted servant positions are for 1 year, with a 2 year limit on consecutive terms in the same position.
- b. Anytime a trusted servant misses a meeting he or she will contact the chair regarding their inability to attend the meeting and also submit a monthly activity report. If a trusted servant fails to meet these criteria two consecutive months, the commitment will be considered OTF.
- c. Any trusted servant may have other responsibilities depending on the needs of ISW