

CoDA's Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) Committee frequently gets asked the same questions. We are sharing some of those and their answers with the CoDA Fellowship.

Question: **In starting an H&I Committee for our intergroup/group, what do we do? What do we need to think about?**

To set up an H&I Committee for your regional group, there are no requirements that need to be followed. Such a committee would be one of those "service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve" that are described in Tradition 9. If the group that you represent has bylaws, those need to be followed.

The group, (Regional Board, intergroup, or voting entity) decides its mandate or goals. Typically, H&I Committees serve to reach the co-dependents who still suffer who may be or are in hospitals or institutions such as penal, psychiatric, or recovery facilities, where contact with the "outside community" is limited. This may also include some educational institutions, but these usually have ready telephone or Internet access. Specifically, how that "reaching out" looks is determined by the local group itself and may vary with the resources available.

The CoDA H&I Committee serves as a network source and resource for the workers who are on the "front lines." We are able to assist with CoDA literature to be used in institutions in the United States, too. We may be able to help with other needs.

To aid us in being a networking source, the H&I committee of CoDA, Inc. (hosp@codas.org) asks that you share contact information for your committee (including your location - a zip code is enough) and a description of what you are doing, to be used should we be contacted by someone who is looking for help or offering help in your general area.

Question: **How can I best prepare myself so that I can contact psychiatric hospitals to bring panels and such to people who may be suffering from codependency?**

In H&I service work it is important for each individual to have worked their program long enough to have seen their Higher Power remove some of their defects of character related to care taking issues. Many people with whom we come in contact through this type of service work have mammoth needs. We also recommend that H&I work is done by a group of people.

The key to gaining access to a facility is finding the right contact person within the facility. It may be a therapist within the facility, the director, someone in charge of aftercare, etc. It is important to share with the contact person how you and your group are willing to serve their clients. So it is necessary for you and your group to decide what you want to offer and then see if that would be helpful to the facility.

Types of things you might offer:

1. A periodic panel where a group of people from your local CoDA group comes into the facility and shares ESH with residents. An initial panel presentation with staff may be helpful.
2. Host a first step meeting on a regular interval depending on the rate of turnover of residents. You lead the meeting and the clients share after your lead. H&I has a meeting format that is tailored for use in institutions available on line at: [Click here for this service item](#)
3. Share pamphlets with the institution, putting an address label for your meeting time and location on each pamphlet. CoDA has several that are appropriate and can be purchased from CoRe Publishing (<https://www.coda.org/e-store/>) like "Am I Codependent?", "What Is CoDA?", "Welcome to Co-Dependents Anonymous," etc. At this time CoDA doesn't have any literature specifically written to the audience of professionals or clients in hospitals or institutions.
4. Provide a copy of Co-Dependents Anonymous and /or The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Workbook for their client library/ book cart. (This can be done through the Books for Inmates and Institutions Program within the US. It is important to have the name of a staff person to whom the book is sent. See brochure online at: http://www.coda.org/service/HI_Donation%20and%20process.pdf)
5. Make meeting lists for your region available to the facility.

Question: [How can I or my meeting support a CoDA Group in a Prison or Institution?](#)

This can be done in multiple ways:

1. Provide CoDA Literature for the institution or a copy of the Institutional Meeting Handbook.
2. Provide funds to send literature to inmates or institutions who request literature. This is through 7th tradition donations to CoDA, Inc. that are directed to the Books for Inmates and Institutions Program where funds are matched from funds in the H&I budget to buy books. These books are then sent to Institutions that may be designated by the donor or sent to inmates who request them from CoDA, Inc. in the United States only. Follow this link for the donation form: [See Info & Order Form](#)
3. Take an occasional panel into the institution to share about "What is CoDA?"
4. Take a weekly meeting into a prison or institution using the Institutional Meeting format.

Note: Not all institutions allow 12 step group meetings. Some have codependency programs or classes during which residents receive information about CoDA and contact this committee for information and or literature.

If you want to take the message into a facility, where do you begin?

Seek guidance from your Higher Power as you consider each of the following steps.

1. Determine what are the resources your group is willing to make available to local H&I service. Options you might consider are finances, time, and number of volunteers.

2. Next is to find a place to serve. Make a list of local/regional facilities where codependents are still suffering and have limited availability to CoDA meetings. This may include Federal or State Prisons, jails, transition homes, treatment centers, and mental hospitals. Contact the warden, director, or head of the facility, or someone who is in charge of educational services, recovery services, counseling services and/or chaplaincy departments of the facility to offer your services in bringing into the institution information about CoDA.
3. After you have established the right contact person, work with them to determine what type of service is best for their inmates/clients. It may be a weekly meeting, a monthly panel, or some other service opportunity.
4. Working with your contact person, jump through the hoops to get permission to enter their facility. Remember you are a guest and they are in control of their facility. They have regulations and procedures that they have set up for good reasons and as guests, we must comply with them.
5. Have your first meeting.
6. Evaluate and continue to support the service you have chosen.

If you have questions about this, please contact the Hospitals & Institutions Committee at hosp@codas.org. We hope that you find this information helpful as you take the message of Co-Dependents Anonymous to codependents who still suffer in hospitals & institutions.