



Update

A NEWSLETTER FOR PROFESSIONALS

NA Participates in Strategy Meeting with USA Drug Czar

"The bad news is that there were an estimated 2.7 million chronic, hardcore drug users in the United States in 1993," observed Lee Manchester, Narcotics Anonymous staffer, in a December 1995 meeting with Dr. Lee Brown, Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. "The good news is that, during an average week in 1995, about 217 thousand drug addicts a number equal to 8% of the chronic, hardcore drug users in the USA attended one of the 17 thousand Narcotics Anonymous meetings held across that country."

Our meeting with Dr. Brown took place at an ONDCP regional forum in Miami. USA government officials had started meeting with leaders from the full spectrum of the addictions field for the past couple of years when developing America's National Drug Control Strategy. Last year's forum marked the first time Narcotics Anonymous had been invited to participate.

In our meeting with Dr. Lee Brown, it was noted that NA is the oldest, largest, and fastest growing of the self-help groups in the United States whose members are helping one another stay drug-free over the long haul. Based on the prevalence of the Narcotics Anonymous movement, we discussed ways the USA National Drug Control Strategy might strengthen the role of community-based self-help groups like NA in providing long-term support for recovering drug addicts:

- Researching NA would identify ways to coordinate activities of policy makers, public health practitioners, and criminal justice officials with Narcotics Anonymous efforts.

- Publicly advocating the services provided by NA may encourage more addicts who want help to attend our meetings, where they can find support.

- Treatment facilities receiving government block-grant money could be encouraged to refer their clients to Narcotics Anonymous.

It is unlikely that the American government will take such a strongly proactive stance toward Narcotics Anonymous after only one meeting. However, Dr. Brown and his staff were open to further discussions with NA, discussions which we hope will continue with the new ONDCP director, Gen. Barry McCaffrey.