

OA Renewal Survey

Executive Summary

Houston Metropolitan Intergroup
OA Renewal Committee

February, 2008

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Observations and Conclusions

The following observations and conclusions are based on OA member responses to the Houston Metropolitan Intergroup (HMI) OA Renewal Survey conducted from November 17 – December 17, 2007. Please note that detailed responses to the survey are provided in the full HMI OA Renewal Committee Survey Report, dated February, 2008.

Observations

1. Membership vs. Abstinence: The median number of years in OA is three years, with a median range from zero to twenty. However, the median length of abstinence is less than one year.
 - Median years as member = 3 years (Range 0 – 20 years)
 - Median length of abstinence < 1 year
2. Sponsors Needed: There is a great need for sponsors. It is important that sponsors:
 - Let it be know that they are willing to sponsor
 - Know what abstinence is
 - Know what sponsorship is all about
 - Have a history of abstinence
3. Difficulties in Finding a Sponsor: There is also some confusion about the process for finding a sponsor, with many members not knowing how, when, or where to look.
4. Obstacles to Sponsorship: The main obstacles to sponsoring another member are:
 - Haven't been asked
 - Not finished working steps/not ready
 - Lack of abstinence
5. Attraction to OA Groups: What attracts members most is:
 - Food plan
 - Sharing of positive points
 - Study of 12 steps and 12 traditions
 - Long-term abstinence
 - Regular attraction of newcomers
 - Warm welcome of newcomers with personal follow-up

6. Dissatisfaction with OA Groups: What repels members most is:
 - Same people every week (lack of newcomers)
 - Low or irregular attendance
 - Few members with successful OA recovery and abstinence
 - Cross-talk
 - Lack of willing and knowledgeable sponsors
 - No time limit on sharing

7. Reasons People Join: The top three reasons members are attracted to OA are:
 - Spiritual aspects of program
 - Progress in overcoming compulsive overeating
 - Support derived from meetings & members

8. Reasons People Leave: The top three reasons people leave OA are:
 - Lack of progress in weight loss
 - Inconvenient location
 - Thought I was “cured”

9. Reasons People Return: The top three reasons people return to OA are:
 - Weight gain after leaving OA
 - Realized that OA 12-Step program was needed
 - Social aspects of OA meetings

10. How HMI/OA Can Help Stengthen Recovery: There is a strong desire among members for more emphasis on abstinence and food plans. OA HOW members strongly favored a food plan that encourages weighing and measuring food. The most frequent suggestions included:
 - More stories of recovery
 - More emphasis on abstinence
 - More calls and encouragement from members
 - Less negativity – more focus on the solution, not the problem
 - Weighed and measured food plan
 - Focus on OA talk, not outside or personal issues

11. Improvements That Would Strengthen OA Groups: There were many suggestions for strengthening OA meetings. The most frequently cited suggested included:
 - Encourage all meetings to acknowledge periods of abstinence (both long- and short-term) and perhaps recommending that members have some abstinence to share
 - Provide additional workshops
 - Improve outreach to non-members
 - Calls from long-time members to newcomers and lapsed members
 - Easier access to literature
 - Child-friendly meetings
 - Detailed maps to OA meetings

12. Workshops Are Considered an Important Recovery Tool: Top suggested workshops for aiding recovery included mini-workshops (in priority order) on:

- Abstinence
- Plan of Eating
- Recovery from Relapse
- Sponsorships
- 12-Steps

Conclusions

HMI should develop **an Action Plan** to increase successful participation in OA through the following means:

- Regular participation in groups
- OA guidelines for groups (How to improve meetings)
- OA Sponsorship – all aspects, including:
 - How, when, and where to find a sponsor
 - The requirements for being a sponsor
 - What to expect from the sponsor/sponsee relationship
- Use of Food Plans
- OA service
- Outreach to current and lapse members
- Community outreach