My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.



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NUMBER 14

One Addict
Helping Another Addict





THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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N.A.

N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other to stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one requirement for membership, the honest desire to stop using. There are no musts in N.A., but we suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles, written so simply, that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that they work.

From The Editor

Well, another issue is out on schedule. A special thanks to all individuals and newsletters who contributed material. With new subscriptions coming in all the time, your written message is getting out to an ever growing number of addicts worldwide. Keep that new material coming! We encourage every reader to sit down and share with us on any topic related to recovery in NA. Someone out there needs to hear what you have to share.

As we expected, responses to the letter we printed in the August issue regarding our basic text have begun coming in. They have been included here in our "Letters to the Editor" section. Feel free to join in the open dialogue within the Fellowship on this or any other issue of common interest. Perhaps the NA Way can offer a unique service to the Fellowship in

continuing to provide such a forum.

Another service we intend to expand for you is our section entitled, "Comin' up." We have made a decision to print any NA related announcement of upcoming events. Send us announcements of your one day events as well as the larger conventions. We hope this policy will better serve the Fellowship at the local level. We may eventually need to modify that as we grow, but for now, send us everything, and we'll run it.

Thanks, NA, for your continued and growing support. Our need for written input is still great, but we are confident that, together, we will continue to put together a monthly, on going journal of NA recovery.

R.H. Editor



One Addict

Helping Another Addict

I'm an addict who likes discovering more about my Twelve Steps and sharing that with my friends. I especially like sharing with new friends that have finally found out that they want this program to work in their lives.

In our area, we recently had our three day Twelve Step Annual Spiritual Retreat. When I arrived there at 2:00 a.m., I met a couple of friends that I have been growing up with since I came to NA. We shared for a while, then decided to play cards until daylight, when I would put up my tent. At 10:00 a.m. the step study got underway. There were a few people I didn't know, so I introduced myself and shared a hug. To my surprise, they were only ten to thirty days clean. I could see in their eyes that they wanted to know how I had surrendered to the first step. I told them how I had struggled with it until one day I knew in my heart I was an addict with a purpose on this earth, and that I was free!

All during the day I could feel my Higher Power around me. I felt happy, confident and secure. I shared my knowledge of the Steps with other addicts who had less time than I. I found myself making the Twelve Steps sound so simple. My insanity often tried to complicate the steps, but I tried to follow the guidance of my Higher Power, and took direction from my friends in recovery.

At the end of the retreat, we opened the floor to those who wanted to share their experience on the Twelve Steps. Of course, it took a half a minute for people to get up the courage to talk. Members who only had ten days clean got up and shared their hope, their pain and their dreams of carrying the message to the addict who still suffered, whether in these rooms or outside these doors. I'm so grateful for the gift of life my Higher Power has given me that I'll reach out to any suffering addict. I'm grateful for the happiness that allows me to reach out for friends who share that common bond of striving to get better, and to do the right thing for one day.

M.V., Ohio



Today I am proud. Not of what I was or could have been, but of what I'm not. Today I am not a practicing drug addict.

Today when I meet strangers, even in strange lands, I do not run away from who I am. I do not wear the mask that I hid behind for so many years.

Now I worship life as I never did before. I discover the joy in simple living that I looked for so very long in chemical obsession.

I am not cured or perfect, just a mortal human back on the path that leads to live.

W.S., New Jersey

Spirit of Service



The spirit of service is one of the primary contributors to growth in the spiritual Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We are recovering addicts, living the steps, and carrying the message of recovery to the still suffering addict. This is a duty given to me from the God of my understanding. I use the term "duty" loosely, because it's actually a gift to be able to carry the message. I can never separate God from service, because through this Fellowship, God gave me life, so today I give my life back to this Fellowship in grateful service.

The term "service" to some means work, "boring" meetings and confusion. To me it means I have the chance to repay this program for the peace of mind it has given me. By staying clean, working the steps, doing selfless service and having faith, I will day by day fulfill the promise of the eleventh step: a closer contact with my Higher Power.

I love this Fellowship, and I'm grateful for the strength and hope it's given me. Service is therefore a central part of my personal recovery. Without it, my purpose would seem lost. Today, I am a part of something, something that is growing and vibrant. At last, I'm on a path of hope, and not destruction. I believe that only through my willingness to serve a lifegiving Fellowship will I ever become a productively active member of both society and that Fellowship.

Thanks, NA, for being here when I was ready, and thank God for those few productive and serene members who worked a program of service, and cared for an addict who was still suffering—me!

R.W., Tennessee



Dual Addiction In N.A.?

In the Narcotics Anonymous pamphlet it states, "In NA we follow a program borrowed from Alcoholics Anonymous." In the last forty years more than one million people have recovered in AA, most of them just as hopelessly addicted to alcohol as we were to drugs."

Narcotics Anonymous has been in existence for over thirty years, yet our members remain relatively

few. I have, for sometime now, wondered why.

Perhaps one reason is that members of Alcoholics Anonymous had no other Fellowship to fall back on when the road of recovery became tough. They were forced to remain in AA and work through the difficulties, growing pains and personal problems. Their choice was simple: stay, work the Steps, adhere to the Traditions or DIE.

It is unfortunate that we members of Narcotics Anonymous have it so easy. When the Narcotics Anonymous path becomes difficult or uncomfortable, we can simply declare ourselves "dual addicted" and

disappear into Alcoholics Anonymous.

"Dual Addiction" is a redundant concept. It was popularized by alcohol treatment hospitals and recovery centers who wished to provide services to addicts whose primary drug of choice was other than alcohol. Alcohol is one of the oldest known drugs. Alcoholics are drug addicts. Referring to oneself as being "dual addicted" is like stating that you are an addict and an addict.

THANK GOD that the first one hundred members of AA had no place to hide. They had to stay in their Fellowship and work through their problems. THANK GOD they were guided as they searched for and discovered the Twelve Steps. Most important, THANK GOD that He touched their hearts and influenced them to share those Twelve Steps with other groups who suffered from the disease of addiction.

If members of Narcotics Anonymous can resist the temptation to disappear into AA, and instead can remain in Narcotics Anonymous, work the Steps, adhere to the Traditions, support new members and encourage other addicts to do likewise, then perhaps someday soon some other Twelve Step Fellowship will be reporting through its literature that..."More than one million people have recovered in Narcotics Anonymous, most of them just as hopelessly addicted to drugs as we were to..."

ARIZONA NA MEMBER AND PROUD OF IT



World Convention 1985

The World Convention of Narcotics Anonymous, 15 will be held in Washington D.C., August 30, 31 thru September 1, 1985. The Host Committee will announce registration in the near future. Those interested in contacting the committee may do so by writing to: WCNA15—P.O. Box 2232, Washington D.C. 20013

NA In Brisbane

It has been just over one year since NA started in Brisbane. The odds against the Fellowship surviving were fairly high, but after a lot of ups and downs some of us are still here to keep the doors open. At times only sheer obstinance has kept some of us hanging in there. It's still early days yet, but with the help of a loving God as we do or don't understand him, we should see another year out.

When we first started out, there were only a handful of us who had any understanding of the programme. In the early days those of us who had been clean for any length of time tried to carry the message of recovery any way we could. We had a lot of newcomers, very few have stuck around and become regulars. Some still come back on an irregular basis.

When NA first started here with one meeting a week, enthusiasm was high, literature scarce and experience with recovery with the Twelve Steps was pretty thin. As time went by, we added a second meeting on Friday nights and a third at Wacol Rehab on Mondays. In those very early days, NA existed because of a persons vision of giving addicts a chance to recover with a programme similar to that of AA. He had seen evidence that addicts could get off the merry-go-round and start to live without drugs of any description using the Twelve Steps. Today I think that all would agree that NA exists because of a loving God who expresses Himself in our group conscience.

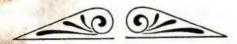
In December of '83 our steering committee was first formed. The first meeting was held in February of '84, at which discussion centered on our need to be more organized, and the need for people coming to our meetings to try to come "clean." By this time we had begun to stay in contact with Sydney and Bangalow more regularly. We started to get around and attempt to let people in hospitals and other rehabs know that NA offered a way out of the maze.

At Easter, some of us went to the First Area Convention in Sydney. Up till then enthusiasm had slackened off, and a few members had busted but kept coming back. I personally got a lot from the convention and learned a lot from the people who attended.

Since then, NA has started to find some stability, and the beginnings of a potentially strong Fellowship have begun to emerge. The meetings, although small, are now beginning to settle into a more positive format after a period of darkness. A step meeting has been added on Thursday night. Attendance is small, but it is being supported by the same people.

God willing, NA will continue to grow and become more healthy and positive as we grow a day at a time. By the way mention should be made of the good job J— is doing on the Gold Coast. Thanks to everyone who has supported and encouraged us in any way.

D----, Australia



2nd Volunteer Region Convention

The 2nd Volunteer Region Convention will be held Thanksgiving weekend, November 21st thru November 25 at the Sheraton West In Knoxville, TN. For Reservations write to: VRCII, P.O. Box 10213, Knoxville, TN 37939-0213



Acceptance

Today I recognize the importance of regular meetings of NA. I had to gain that appreciation the hard way. When I was introduced to the Fellowship of NA. I was told that I didn't have to use. I was told to go to ninety meetings in ninety days, to get a sponsor, and to get involved. I got a sponsor, but I laughed at the rest of that advice. I could not see that my life was at stake.

When I first cleaned up, I was working off-shore and was unable to attend meetings for two to three weeks at a time. I was out there among using addicts--no meetings, no one to talk to, no one to watch me. It was there that I really had to confront the ugly side of the disease of addiction. My mind told me, "I can use and nobody will know, I can lie to these people; they will never suspect a thing." Another part of me knew that if I used, I just may never make it back to the Fellowship. I had been a loser all my life and desperately wanted this one thing to work for me. Man. I could have used a meeting!

When I did make it to meetings, I was almost too keenly aware that many people took them for granted. I resented addicts who said they felt guilty for not going to a meeting for several days. If only I had their opportunity! My sponsor helped me by his usual simple insight: "It's their choice whether or not to go to meetings; it's your choice whether or not to hold on to resentments."

That sponsor helped me through those early days in many ways. He shared a lot with me, and much of it stayed with me each time I went back to work for another few weeks. I learned that as an addict, I'm really powerless over me. This was a hard "pill" to swallow. I would rather see my problem as somebody else's fault. I would rather see my addiction as only a drug problem. Eventually I had to face the fact that, if I am an addict, then when I remove the drugs the problem becomes me. In order for "me" to get better, my sponsor informed me, I would have to work the steps.

Then I began to realize early on that the program presented a set of tools that made it possible to stay clean anywhere. Not having regular meetings was a disadvantage, but recovery was still possible as long as I made wise use of the other tools. I wrote letters, I listened to tapes, and most importantly, I prayed and asked for help. When I could, I went to

meetings to share and to listen.

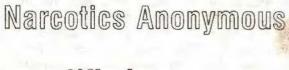
In the process, I made a decision to live. My sponsor had helped me to see that my choices really boiled down to this: work the steps and recover, or stay sick and die from the disease, that scared me! No one could make that choice for me so I chose to take an honest look at me, and to take the actions to After almost two years, I am coming to accept me-good and bad. You gave me that opportunity by accepting me before I could accept myself.

Thank you, NA, for life. The Steps work, the other suggested "tools" work, the NA program works. If you're new to it all, I know it can work for you

too. Jump in!

Anonymous









I am so grateful today to know what Narcotics Anonymous is. Also I am grateful to know what it is not.

Simply walking into a room full of drug addicts does not constitute attending an NA meeting. If, however, that room full of addicts is offering the program of NA to the newcomer—twelve simple, practical, and spiritual steps—only then can the spirit of NA be felt and experienced.

Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with any outside organizations. We are a self-supporting Fellowship that has learned to stand on its own two feet. NA has its own program of recovery, and any outside help an individual member might pursue is a choice made by that member and not a prerequisite for letting NA happen in your life.

When I go to an NA meeting, I like to hear the message of recovery the NA way—not the rehab or "after care" way, or the local priest or rabbi's way, or the psychiatric way, or the "primal scream" way—I come to hear the message of Narcotics Anonymous, pure and unadulterated. I know that it was NA that

dragged me out of the gutter and taught me how to stay clean for six uninterrupted years; when I go to an NA meeting, I share that with a newcomer. While paths such as psychiatric counseling, religion, fad books for the "head," meditation classes, etc., may enhance our personal program, and perhaps help us better understand ourselves and assist us in our search for a God of our own understanding, I would be walking down the road of disillusionment if I thought for one moment that any of these other ways could alone replace what I have found in Narcotics Anonymous.

If you are new, go to lots of meetings and learn to watch as well as listen. Ask yourself if your group considers itself a part of NA as a whole or did it isolate itself and become an entity unto itself. Most groups support one another, and their members can be seen at other NA meetings and functions as well. As a newcomer, you deserve to hear the NA message of recovery in its truest and most undilluted form.

F.A., New Jersey

"ORUAMO"



The Maori [a native New Zealand language] word which probably brings the warmest message to any addict is the commonly used "aroha." This one word conveys all the nuances of meaning contained in the words, love, faith, hope and charity. That great feeling of warmth and humanity emanating from and through any successful NA meeting is in its own way "aroha."

There is, however, another Maori word which comes to my mind when I'm reflecting on the power of NA and its Twelve Step Programme. That word is "oruamo," or "for all."

No matter who we are, where we are from, whatever we have done, whatever and how often we used, how old we are, how sick we are, how short or how long a time we have been clean, how many treatments or how many "crashes" we've had, Narcotics Anonymous is for every one of us. For all of us. Oruamo.

At the beginning of this year, one of my favourite fellow addicts died after many years of happily staying clean. Once or twice a week this man, a Maori, would stop by to see me, and would share a "thought of the day." Sometimes he spoke the thought, and sometimes he simply handed me a little scrap of paper with the message written on it. These messages

were usually related to "aroha," to equality, to humility. My favourite message from him came early in my recovery. It went something like this:

I like to think of the Twelve Step Programme as a "bag of tools." No matter what the occasion, what sort of person I'm communicating with, I only have to dip into that and I can always find the right tool to "fix" the situation. And you know, there's always a tool in the bag to suit anyone. Anyone at all.

For me this bag of tools has proven time and time again that there is always one step to work on to help me over whatever the hassle I have gotten myself into. Once I used a chemical to evade facing the hassle; now I just dip into the bag of twelve tools, and you know, I eventually come up with "aroha" every time.

Now into my fourth year of staying clean, I find I am relying on the sixth and seventh steps a great deal, and more often than not I end up turning to the eleventh—for direction, I guess.

But more than anything, I can claim right now the knowledge that the twelfth step (which of course leads back into step one and then on through the programme yet again) proves conclusively that this "bag of tools" is for everyone. If we allow it to be, it is ORUAMO.

D-, New Zealand



3rd Annual Virginia Convention

The 3rd Annual Virginia Convention will be held at the New Marriott Hotel in Richmond, VA on February 4, 5, 6 1985. The theme of "Spirit of Unity—Foundation for the Future" will set the Tenar of the Convention. For Registration write: P.O. Box 25285, Richmond, VA 23260.

Living the 9th Step



"How Not To Be A Human Steam Roller"

From the very start of my recovery "three and a half" years ago, my sponsors have been very persistent in pointing out a whole new system of behavior, contained in the second half of the twelfth step: "practice these principles in all our affairs." But I had a very immediate, and seemingly insolvable problem with even the most superficial beginnings of this task: "what principles, and where do you find out about them?"

Well, as I might have guessed, and as is always the answer to my problems, my sponsor would say, "It's all in the Steps." But this didn't really seem to help. me much, for even a couple of months into my recovery I could recite the Steps, I still couldn't see any principles in them beyond their obvious directions.

Fortunately I had very patient sponsors who were more than willing to answer my sometimes stupid questions, and who even encouraged me to question the program freely and frequently. I was taught that there are many marvelous and helpful spiritual principles spread throughout the Steps. One main one that I learned about was a new way to get along with other people, for this had been a problem my whole life.

I had always been an energetic and outspoken person, although I could see, even at an early age, that others were often negatively affected by my actions. It was common for me to swing like a pendulum between extremes: either I would be very bold and

domineering, or I'd lock myself in my apartment, close the blinds, not answer the door and take the phone off the hook. I had no intuitive balance about how my interactions with others should be.

My sponsor was quick to point out that it was OK for me to do as I pleased, "except when to do so would injure them or others." He emphasized that so much of my behavior had been impulsive in the past. I had acted in the grip of fear, anger and jealousy without stopping to reflect on the consequences of my actions.

Boy, could I relate to that, and it didn't take long to recall several examples. Most often, when I get angry, I seem to have a built in urge to do something in response. It may be yelling, arguing, retalliating, fighting or criticizing, but it is almost always something negative. I most often find myself regretting it later, when the heat of the anger (or any other feeling for that matter) has cooled.

Moreover, URGE is exactly the right word, for I seem to be overcome by an irrepressable force that I must act on, immediately. It is not unlike the desire to use. I feel just as powerless over my urge to react to feelings as I did when the desire to use overwhelmed me.

Not only am I powerless, but there is a very specific aspect of insanity to these episodes. I am really unable to apply any logic or good judgement when a strong feeling or emotion is occurring within me. It seems completely justifiable and logical that if something has done me wrong, for whatever reason, it is my responsibility to deliver some wrong or harm back, so that they will learn not to do that to me anymore. This is only one example of the thousands of insane rationalizations that I have used to justify my desire to retaliate and hurt others.

Fortunately, the simple directions and courses of action of NA are as useful for me in handling my feelings as they were in preventing me from picking up that first fix, pill, or drink. I am totally unable to prevent retalliation when I'm in the grip of anger, just as I am unable to stop using once I have started; but just as I was able to call someone before taking that

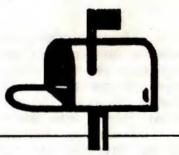
first fix, pill, or drink, I am somehow able to evaluate whether "to do so would injure them or others." It seems just as strange to me today, after having practiced this for three years, as it was the day it was first explained to me. Even in the midst of blazing anger, paralyzing fear, or seething jealousy, I can somehow determine whether my actions will injure someone, or even put me in a position to be harmed. It seems as though the judgement of the likelihood of injury is sort of an inventory of the results of my actions, and it gets me out of my obsession. I have been very successful in using this ninth step principle to interrupt twenty five years of habitual retaliation.

It's kind of funny, and more than just a little embarrassing, to say that the usefulness of this simple course of action has brought me to a level of balance and common sense that had previously escaped me. When it came to politeness, self-control, modesty and judgement, I had always been a miserable failure. I could never seem to cultivate the behaviors that would appear polite, controlled, modest and wise. The powerlessness over reacting to my feelings was the problem, and the ninth step principle of not injuring others is my solution. Without really trying to cultivate politeness, self-control, modesty and judgement, I seem to have found some.

A very noticeable positive result has also occurred: I'm not near the "human steam roller" that I used to be. Once again, without directly struggling with the issue of whether I emotionally run all over others (which I always have) and whose fault these episodes are, the problem has been indirectly solved simply by not doing anything "when to do so would injure them or others."

It has taken some experience to learn how to apply this to the variety of the situations that come up and my sponsor has been very helpful. I am learning to use principles such as this one to put my recovery first, for I know that staying clean and practicing recovery are my life line.

P.S., California Letters from Our Readers...



Dear NA Way

I've decided to write you this letter in spite of my hesitations. I want to share what my hesitations were about, and what writing this letter means in my recovery.

During my clean time I have always deeply loved the Fellowship called Narcotics Anonymous. I am immensely grateful for the life I have received through this program. Yet, I have kept a certain distance from

NA beyond my own home group.

My feelings about a magazine for NA typifies this stance. In the past, I've felt that a magazine would be a terrific idea if only the Fellowship had the resources and maturity to publish a consistent, quality magazine that I could enjoy, expect regularly, and confidently share with others as a vehicle for carrying the message of recovery.

However, I just didn't think we could do it. I had seen too many things in NA started and not finished, done poorly, or bogged down in meaningless politics, personalities, and hassles. I don't say this to complain, only to observe what I have seen. So I wouldn't have touched a magazine with a ten foot pole. I didn't want to be disappointed, frustrated and unable

to follow through with others, again.

When I first entered NA out of desperation, I found a comfortable environment in which to begin staying clean. I was thrilled to discover that a group of addicts were staying clean together. During my early days of clean time, I went through several jobs, relationships, philosophies, etc. and lived very erratically. I was too wrapped up in myself to pay much attention to what was happening in NA.

After a while, I began to recover. I began to take better care of myself. I began to gain self-respect. My life began to improve and stabilize. I began to be restored to sanity. About this time, I started to want to put a little bit of what I had received back into the program.

Gradually, though, I adopted the attitude of keeping my distance from NA outside my home group due to what I felt was going on. I decided that I would do my part by putting a contribution in the can at meeting collections, chairing meetings when asked, cleaning up the meeting's ashtrays, etc., but that otherwise I would avoid getting involved in NA matters going on outside my group. I felt that NA's service structure was too complicated by egos, personality conflicts, inconsistency and the like for the Fellowship to grow beyond squabbles and wild goose chases. I did not wish to waste time in those activities.

I thought seriously of quitting NA entirely, but I kept going to meetings because I felt that as an addict this was the program for me. Sadly, I didn't feel anymore that I was in an environment conducive to my recovery, as I had felt when I was new to recovery.

My feelings toward NA are still pretty much the same as what I have said in this letter. But I am slowly, cautiously, beginning to allow some hope to emerge within me. One sign of that hope is that I have subscribed to the NA Way. I believe the feelings I have talked about are common in NA. I know several of my friends feel the same way as I do. I believe the NA Way can become the Fellowship magazine I have dreamed of. I'm proud and grateful that we have hired a competent professional managing editor.

If the Fellowship pitches in and unifies around the NA Way, we could establish an important new stage of growth. I don't want to exaggerate the potential, the magazine can't do magic. With or without the NA Way, we've got a very, very long way to go towards becoming a mature Fellowship. But if we make it work, the magazine could be a tremendous step forward.

So I'm encouraging NA members to take hold of this magazine. WRITE IN TO IT. Subscribe. Give it to people. Drop it off around your town wherever you think it might do some good. Sneak it to people like me. Send in articles, and let the voice of Honest speak. This is our magazine. Let's use it, and make it thrive.

I hope this magazine will be a place for frank, vibrant, on-going sharing. I dream that in the future, NA will become a stable mature environment in which long-term, healthy recovery is abundant. I dream of a day when the growing pains and problems our Fellowship has been going through will diminish, and then we can get on with the business of being a society of men and women addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean.

W.L., North Dakota



Dear NA Way

I'm writing in response to the letter found on page 24, in the August issue of the NA Way Magazine, "About our Book—Does Anyone Care?"

Yes I do care, along with many addicts!!!

I kept an open mind and re-read the chapters the writer spoke about in the letter. "Garbled" is the term used, but the chapters did not seem to me to distort, confuse, or mislead.

What still amazes me is that addicts always want to change something that works. Our World Service Conference Literature Committee already has its hands full revising the fourth step guide, getting new pamphlets out for approval, working on the <u>Living Clean</u> book, and getting together the material for the new book on the steps and traditions. Why not give them a break?

While I was in treatment in 1981, I had a chance to read a rough draft of the Basic Text, and even as sick and confused as I was I could relate to what it said. I know that our Basic Text helps all addicts who are willing to give it a try, and yes, some one could use the Text to do a fourth step along with a guide.

Addicts today do not have to "substitute." We

have a choice!

The "quibbling," as you put it, about the fourth and ninth tradition needs to be aired—out it's the principal of the matter.

We have only trusted servants, they do not govern! And when a Tradition is broken it had better be discussed, from group, to area, to regional even on

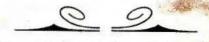
to world level.

I am one addict who is grateful to a Higher Power, and the dedicated addicts that gave endless hours and devotion, to turn a dream into reality.

I do believe your making a big deal out of

nothing.

C.M., Louisiana



Fellowship Conventions

You will notice a change in the treatment of information about fellowship conventions in this issue from how such information was presented in prior issues. In the future we will present more detailed information about conventions, as we have in this issue, but the information will not be provided more than three months prior to the event.

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