



## Starting A CMA Meeting

Congratulations on starting a new CMA meeting! Starting a Crystal Meth Anonymous meeting is surprisingly simple, and it may be one of the most exciting things you ever do in recovery. One thing we can tell you for certain is that we don't get sober alone. By reaching out to help—and get support from—other addicts, you are making an enormous difference in not just your own recovery, but possibly in the lives of countless addicts in your area.

More good news: Thousands of addicts have gone before you, and we're more than happy to help. We've gathered here some ideas to help you get started, some answers to questions you may have, and some suggestions based on our experience.

The suggestions that follow are not “rules.” There are a wide variety of types of meetings. What we offer here are templates that you can download. They can be paired with one or more of the various CMA readings that are available here to download as well. We recognize that there are significant regional variations in the structure, format, and types of commitments at meetings. Please accept this as a general road map and not a list of “thou shalt” or “you musts.”

At its most basic, a meeting is a group of two or more recovering addicts who meet to help one another stay clean, and to carry the message of recovery to each other and, most importantly, the newcomer. This is the *primary* purpose of the meeting. That said, Meetings eventually become important places for addicts to meet sponsors; to celebrate anniversaries; to take commitments, and even to organize social outings and engage in fellowship. The meeting is a place to share the message, but it is also the bedrock of a sober community.” Once established, meetings are encouraged to become a “recognized member group” of CMA and to participate in the service structure of the fellowship, but they are not required to do so.

When starting a new meeting, we found it helpful to try to get folks with some clean time

to attend the new meeting regularly to share their experience and keep it focused on recovery. In most places where CMA first started, newly sober crystal addicts reached out to men and women they met in other fellowships. They shared about their journey in recovery. An important early lesson for us was that a drug is a drug is a drug. It's key to have voices in the room talking about sober life as a whole to balance out the newcomers who may still be obsessed with using meth."

Ultimately, how you run your meeting and who comes are not nearly as important as the spirit and focus you bring. You may go many months with just two or three addicts doing a little reading and sharing their experience—that's fine. In many places where CMA flourishes today, we miss the intimacy of our early gatherings. But all meetings, big and small, have one thing in common: We come to get and stay sober. The suggestions and formats on the following pages will help you give your meeting a structure, but you must supply the key element of willingness. You and your fellows will be sharing your experience, strength, and hope, after all.

### ***Types of Meetings***

The most basic meeting is a group sharing meeting, where, after some initial readings, members take turns sharing their experience of working the twelve steps, discussing issues in their recovery, and describing what has worked to help them stay clean. Some meetings choose to focus the sharing by keeping a list of topics, or reading a step or bit of recovery literature and asking people to share on that topic. You may let people share randomly as they are moved to. Some meetings go "round robin," with members sitting in a circle (circles are really good for all meeting types; they're conducive to a communal spirit) and going around the room so everyone shares in turn. This format works well for smaller meetings, but may become unworkable when the meeting grows too large for everyone to have a turn.

The meeting formats on the website work well for new meetings or in areas drawing on a small community of recovering people. As your CMA community grows, you may want to gradually add other meetings using different formats. In areas without existing CMA meetings it often works better in the beginning to have one meeting a week regularly attended by three to five people, than to try and have one meeting every day attended by fewer people.

Some meetings use a mechanism to randomize the sharing, like distributing tickets and drawing numbers to determine who shares next. Another similar method is called a “God stick.” The secretary or chair of the group keeps a jar of tongue depressors like a doctor uses with short recovery topics, steps, or suggestions written on them. The jar is passed around during the meeting; attendees draw sticks to select a suggested topic to share about.

There are also meetings that follow a speaker-participation format, where a speaker who is known to have good recovery is asked to share their experience, strength, and hope, or to discuss the way they have worked the steps to stay clean. After they speak, the floor is opened for others to share. Obviously these meetings require a pool of recovering people to draw from as speakers. Areas with large recovery communities may have meetings that are pure speaker meetings; at these one or two individuals are asked to share while the others listen.

### ***Commitments***

A bare bones meeting can be operated with one service commitment, called the meeting’s chairperson or secretary. For a while, this may be the person who started the meeting. Afterward, the position should rotate, the person being elected by the meeting’s members. Generally the chairperson/secretary makes sure the meeting happens, ensuring that the meeting is functioning as smoothly as possible; in the beginning they’ll also be the liaison with the meeting’s host, be it a recovery clubhouse, church, community center, or hospital.

As the meeting grows, other positions may be elected, often a treasurer to collect and account for seventh tradition donations; a chip and/or literature person to distribute recovery chips, books, and brochures; and a secretary to make notes on the proceedings of business meetings. More details on commitments and their functions can be found in the CMA brochure “What is a Service Commitment” available at [www.crystalmeth.org](http://www.crystalmeth.org). We suggest that you conduct regular business meetings to take care of your group’s operational business, such as electing officers, spending or distributing seventh tradition funds collected, changing the meeting format etc. Suggestions for how to do this can be found in the CMA brochure “CMA Business Meetings.”

### ***Readings and Prayers***

Many meetings start with one or two short readings, chosen from the writings of Crystal Meth Anonymous. CMA readings are found here on the [crystalmeth.org](http://crystalmeth.org) website. Many meetings also close with a reading. Readings are useful for several reasons: They serve as a coda which helps collect people's thoughts; in contrast with the shares of individual members, which are exceedingly personal and can occasionally be controversial, the literature reinforces widely accepted principles of the program; and finally they introduce an element of ritual and routine which newcomers find especially grounding.

Many meetings also use prayers. Like readings, they serve as helpful codas to what is, after all, a spiritual group exercise. The most commonly used prayer in CMA is the Serenity Prayer, but meetings may choose to use other prayers as well.

Some agnostic topic meetings use no prayers whatever, choosing instead to open and close with a moment of silence. The choice is yours. CMA is a spiritual program, but finding a Higher Power of one's own understanding is a uniquely personal journey for each member. Our recommendation: Be sensitive to the needs of your members and keep an open mind.

### ***Counting Days and Sharing Clean Time***

Many meetings take a moment at some point to welcome newcomers and ask those counting days in early recovery to share their clean time. Furthermore, they ask members celebrating sober anniversaries to share those. In this way, people identify themselves by how much clean time they have. Usually people with less than thirty days are asked to identify by first name: "I'm Boris, I am a crystal meth addict with ten days clean," or "Natasha, addict, 20 days." Once this is done, those with longer clean times are identified with a simple hand raising: "Will those with 30 to 60 days please raise your hands?" "60 to 90 days?" and so on. Most groups find the celebrating of clean time a valuable tool in reinforcing sober reference, but some choose not to draw attention to counts and milestones, on the principle that the program is lived and worked a day at a time. Again, the choice is yours.

### ***Chips and Literature***

Often people think that what makes a new meeting “real” is distributing recovery chips. But truly, what makes a meeting real and useful is that it carries the message of recovery through helping its members understand and work the program as outlined in the Twelve Steps. *Chips are entirely optional.* If funds are tight, a meeting may choose to subsidize twelve-step literature for new members instead. If you do choose to have chips it is helpful to have a person be in charge of distributing them during the meeting, as well as maintaining your inventory. Chips can be purchased from CMA World Services online.

Literature is a wonderful tool for CMA newcomers and other fellows who don't have the luxury of diverse, convenient CMA meetings. Crystal Meth Anonymous has a book, which is a collection of step essays and stories, as well as many helpful pamphlets which you can also access online. In addition, some regional Intergroups have produced still further literature, which your group may find helpful. We strongly urge you to have some pamphlets on hand at your meeting. Likewise, some meetings carry the literature of Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous on their literature tables. It is important to have 12 Step literature on-hand to fulfill our primary purpose of carrying the message of recovery.

### ***Choosing a Format***

Here you will find a selection of meeting formats. This is in no way a comprehensive collection of meeting formats. It is a selection of a few meeting formats found around the world. The types of CMA meetings are growing every day. If you choose to download one of these formats, feel free to customize it for your location and your audience. The Microsoft Word doc. format is offered here so that you can fill in the name of the meeting and enter the readings that your group will choose to read before and after the meeting or have no readings at all. We do however suggest that the 12 Steps be read at every meeting because these are the basis of the program that changes our lives. Truly, the meeting is how the 12 Steps are introduced to a suffering addict and one of the best ways to pair up a newcomer with someone who can take them through those life-changing steps.