

Assisting Medical and Health Care Students and Professionals

Overeaters Anonymous (OA) has a powerful message: Those who suffer from compulsive eating find recovery through abstinence and the practice of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous.

One effective way to share this message is to make a presentation to health care personnel-in-training (those studying to become nurses, doctors, counselors, etc.) during their education. To reach these students, we need to invite those responsible for health care education to include an introduction to OA as part of their curriculum.

OA service bodies can send the sample letter, attached, to school administrators when offering to make a presentation about OA to their students. We envision the letter as an initial contact (a “cold call”) with an administrator in charge of curriculum. Any OA member can adapt this letter to best carry the message.

Before sending this letter, either as an email or hard copy, have a plan for what comes next. The *Public Information and Professional Outreach Service Manual* (found [here](https://bookstore.oa.org) at bookstore.oa.org) and the *Guidelines for Professional Outreach Committees* (found [here](https://bookstore.oa.org) and in the [oa.org](https://bookstore.oa.org) Document Library) are excellent resources in this regard.

Feel free to use all or part of this letter to meet the specific needs of your service body. The *Public Information and Professional Outreach Service Manual* and the content of the letter are not guides for how to enact data privacy or implement data protection, however. When using these resources, OA members and groups should comply with applicable data privacy regulations and laws.

Privacy Disclaimer

As communication and outreach has moved more and more to digital formats, the need to protect data and privacy has increased. States, countries, and economic and political partnerships have enacted laws to protect the public. For example, in May 2018, the European Union put into effect one of the toughest privacy and security laws in the world, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The term “data privacy” concerns who has access to data, such as how data is shared and stored. The term “data protection” concerns the tools and policies that restrict access to the data, such as how data is safeguarded.

Sample letter

[Modified OA letterhead]

[Date]

[Name]

[Address]

Dear [amend as applicable]:

“I don’t know what else to do with your eating disorder—we have tried everything.”

During their studies in [name of organization or field of study, e.g., “Digestive Systems” or “Nutrition and Metabolism”], will your [type of students, e.g., medical students] learn how to help their future patients keep their compulsive eating behaviors in check and maintain a healthy body weight?

Overeaters Anonymous (OA) is here to help. We are a self-supporting fellowship of individuals whose primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive eating and food behaviors and to carry our message of recovery to the still-suffering compulsive overeater. Our program is adapted from the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. We emphasize the need for a physical, emotional, and spiritual program of recovery to deal with our eating problem.

Curious about how OA can prepare your students to help patients who struggle with compulsive eating? OA offers an ongoing support group that encourages individuals to help one another, thereby weakening their isolation and loneliness. OA claims no medical, nutritional, or psychological expertise, and we recommend members contact qualified medical professionals for help in these areas.

Don’t take our word for it, however—see the compelling data below from a 2017 survey of OA members*:

<i>Life Improvements</i>	<i>Significant Improvement</i>	<i>Moderate Improvement</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Mental/emotional health</i>	76%	18%	94%
<i>Daily functioning</i>	72%	21%	93%
<i>Spiritual connection</i>	74%	18%	92%
<i>Relationships</i>	64%	24%	88%
<i>Overall physical health</i>	58%	26%	84%
<i>Weight issues</i>	53%	27%	80%

*Details can be found in the 2017 Membership Survey Report at [oa.org/survey](https://www.oa.org/survey).

On behalf of our [*name of service body/committee*], I would like to extend an offer for members of our committee to speak to you, your staff, students, or other individuals within your organization. In addition to speakers who will share their stories, we can provide more detailed information, OA literature, and a list of available meetings.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [*phone number, email*]. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss reaching the still-suffering compulsive eater.

Sincerely,

[*Name*]

[*Name of service body/committee*]

Overeaters Anonymous

OA Board-approved

Overeaters Anonymous®, Inc.
6075 Zenith Court NE
Rio Rancho, New Mexico 87144-6424 USA
PO Box 44727, Rio Rancho, NM 87174-4727 USA
1-505-891-2664 • info@oa.org • oa.org
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