



**ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT**

# **Organizing Kit**

**A Guide for Those Initiating or Strengthening  
AVP in Communities and Prisons**

**Revised 2010  
Alternatives to Violence Project / USA**

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Grateful thanks to the many AVP coordinators and facilitators who worked together to revise the text of this Organizing Kit. All the boxes throughout the text contain direct first-hand experiences initiating and maintaining AVP in the community and in prisons. So many of these contributors asked to remain anonymous that we need to collectively acknowledge their contributions and dedication to AVP, honoring their request to withhold individual attributions.

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# **INTRODUCTION**

- **What is the Alternatives to Violence Project?**
- **The AVP Mission, Vision and Model**



# INTRODUCTION

Whether you are just starting with AVP, have been a facilitator for a long time and are looking at opening a new program in prison, are starting a new community program, are wanting ideas for recruitment, communicating with prison staff or revitalizing your local council, this organizing kit will be of value.

The three elements of a vital AVP program are featured in this kit:

- Community workshop program
- Local group of facilitators - Area Council
- Prison workshop program

The relationship between the community and the local prison is a crucial part of organizing a sustainable independent program.

An effective AVP program will:

- offer regular community workshops.
- to enrich the local community.
- to train facilitators to go into prisons.
- raise money to fund the prison workshops.
- break down barriers between the prison and the local community, while helping to reduce perceived stereotypes of the incarcerated.

An active local group/council of facilitators sets standards for themselves and their workshops, creates strong, dynamic prison programs, and fosters a vibrant local interest in developing AVP circles in schools, churches and human service agencies.

Area council groups function as the soul and conscience of AVP, and are the source of strength for the organization on a national and international basis.

Once set up, holding prison workshops regularly is no problem since after the first workshops, there will be an eager waiting list among people in the prison. The challenges of offering workshops in the prison need to be dealt with upfront as much as possible; the *experience* and *ethics* of the facilitators, both incarcerated and free, are what make the program an ongoing success.

The challenges you will face are specific to the organization of either community or prison workshops. When we are operating in a prison environment, there are particular requirements that relate to working with the Department of Corrections and the administration of each prison. In the community there are different problems — it is harder to identify willing participants, for example. This organizing kit will explore the different scenarios that facilitators are likely to encounter.

# WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT?

## **Goals**

The Alternatives to Violence Project is a grassroots, independent, international, volunteer movement committed to reducing interpersonal violence in our society. AVP works toward this goal by presenting experiential workshops in prisons, schools, and communities. AVP workshops describe conflict-management skills that can enable individuals to build successful interpersonal interactions, gain insights into themselves, and find new and positive approaches to their lives.

## **Philosophy**

The fundamental belief in AVP is that there is a power for peace in everyone, available to those who are open to it. This power has the ability to transform violence and is called "Transforming Power." AVP builds on a spiritual base of caring for self and others.

## **Program**

AVP is an experiential program , offering the opportunity for people to change. It has a spiritual base, but does not promote any religious doctrine.

AVP is a prison program , helping incarcerated people learn new skills and attitudes that can lead to fulfilling, crime-free lives.

AVP is a community program , offering a new approach for a variety of community groups, social service agencies, youth organizations, and many others.

AVP is a program for everybody regardless of race, religion, political view, or national origin. Founded on the Quaker belief in an inborn power for peace in everyone, it draws its participants and facilitators from all religions, races and walks of life.

## **Organization**

In its origins and philosophy, AVP has ties to the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), but from this beginning, AVP has developed into a non-sectarian, non- political organization.

The Alternatives to Violence Project / USA, Inc. is a private non-profit educational corporation, 501(c)(3).



## **HOW AVP BEGAN**

The Alternatives to Violence Project began in 1975. An inmate group at Green Haven Prison in Dutchess County, New York was engaged in work with youth gangs and teenagers at risk. They sought assistance from the Quaker Project on Community Conflict, and from that original partnership of inmates and Quakers, AVP was born.

The original workshop was so successful that requests were soon received for more. It became evident that the program designed for prison inmates could be useful to everyone. Community people began to seek the AVP training, and workshops are now offered in schools and in communities.

AVP currently has facilitators in well over 40 states and over 50 other countries. The numbers keep growing.

### **AVP National Organization**

At an International Gathering of AVP groups in September of 1990, a national AVP organization was formed. In September of 1992, the first National Interim Board of Directors was appointed. After the development of bylaws and articles of incorporation, a formal Board of Directors was appointed by the AVP/USA annual meeting in September of 1993. That Board of Directors went on to formally adopt a policy statement in January of 1994. Later that structure was changed to reflect AVP/ USA's commitment to local councils as the core of AVP/USA when a Committee of Committees replaced the Board of Directors with each standing committee represented on the body.

### **AVP Workshop Structure**

AVP is an intensive learning experience, offering 18-22 hour workshops on three levels:

#### **The Basic Workshop**

The Basic AVP workshop focuses on primary conflict management skills. Generally, only taken once to lay the foundation of the AVP philosophy and program.

Step-by-step experiences and exercises focus on:

- Affirmation - Building self-esteem and trust.
- Communication - Improving both listening skills and assertive methods of expression.
- Cooperation - Developing cooperative attitudes that avoid competitive conflicts.
- Creative Conflict Management - Getting in touch with the inner "Transforming Power" to manage potentially violent situations. Through role playing, participants learn new and creative ways to respond to conflict situations.

## ***The Advanced Workshop***

The Advanced Workshop focuses on the underlying causes of violence and can be repeated by participants indefinitely.

Some of the common themes explored are:

- Fear - Reveals the hidden fears that usually underlie anger, jealousy, hate, and prejudice.
- Anger - Results in a deeper understanding of the personal situations that trigger anger.
- Communication - Develops personal listening and verbal expression skills and the ability to communicate better in tense and stressful situations.
- Bias Awareness - Builds awareness of stereotyping, bias, and prejudices in personal relations.
- Power and Powerlessness - Helps individuals to understand power structure and how to get in touch with their inner power.
- Forgiveness - Builds the groundwork for true reconciliation and freedom from guilt.

In addition, Advanced Workshops are frequently designed to meet the needs of the specific group being trained, with the theme being chosen by the group or chosen by the team prior to the workshop.

## ***The Training for Facilitators Workshop***

The Training for Facilitators workshop focuses on team building and leadership skills. The curriculum includes:

- Group Process Skills - Introduces leadership styles, planning for experiential learning, and processing of exercises.
- Team Leadership Methods - Focuses on developing a team contract and cooperative leadership styles.
- Hands-on Experience - Offers practice in planning, presenting, processing, and evaluating workshop sessions.

## THE AVP MISSION, MISSION & MODEL

For me, when I first joined AVP, I really thought it could be a tool to try to change the world. Perhaps I tried. How silly of me (?).

Now, 15 years later, the biggest thing to have changed is me. I try hard just to facilitate the exercises, not to teach. Why? When I was a participant, I noticed sometimes an 'enlightened' facilitator tried hard to help me 'get it.' I found that if I really wanted to 'get it,' I needed to 'get it' at my own speed, in my own time and in my own way. Their enlightenment could not be mine. For me, only that way could the lesson be learned. I've changed not just by the lessons in the exercises and the AVP process but by the opportunity I've had to stand at the side of many wonderful people during workshops. It's great to sit with an AVPer in silence, knowing we've both gone through the same processes, so we're really speaking volumes.

I've also witnessed much pain, tears and some anger from those who felt the process was not for them in the end and left the AVP world-circle. I've heard about the AVPers who have had great ideas and visions, only to be told, "That's not AVP." Which, of course, brings up the question, "What is AVP?"

In the end, if I can encourage one person to change one thing they don't like about themselves (through the AVP process and if asked), then AVP was worth it, even if that person is only myself.

### The AVP Mission

The mission of the Alternatives to Violence Project is to empower people to lead nonviolent lives through affirmation, respect for all, community building, cooperation, and trust.

Founded in and developed from the real life experiences of prisoners and others and building on a spiritual base, AVP encourages every person's innate power to positively transform themselves and the world.

AVP/USA is an association of community and prison-based groups, offering experiential workshops in personal growth and creative conflict management. The national organization provides support for the work of these local groups.

### The AVP Vision

Today, we live in a violent society. The homicide rate in the United States is twice that of many developed countries. Physical and mental violence in the home, directed against both spouse and child, is rampant. Violence knows no geographic, class, racial, or economic boundaries; it exists everywhere. Americans cannot take comfort in the fact that this land now leads the world in prison population per capita. Prisons, viewed as a way to protect society from violence, spawn violence of their own.

AVP is working toward the creation of a nonviolent society. Our goal is to reduce the level of violence by introducing people to ways of resolving conflict that reduce their need to resort to violence as the solution. Our process uses the life experience of participants as a learning resource, drawing on that experience to help them deal constructively with the violence in themselves and in their lives. We do our training where violence is found - in our prisons, in our schools and in our communities,

## **The AVP Model**

### ***"We learn by experience."***

The AVP program teaches through experiential learning with a minimum of lecture. The AVP workshops consist of a series of structured experiences or *exercises*. Intellectual knowledge is generally not very useful in the midst of conflict, but repeating nonviolent behavior that has been previously practiced is helpful. Role plays are a key focus of AVP Basic Workshops. They help participants discover new ways to deal with conflict nonviolently and give them an opportunity to practice new behavior.

### ***"The best way to kill the program is to require people to attend it."***

A fundamental requirement is voluntary participation in the program on both an individual and an institutional level. When the program is required or imposed by others, the probability of its leading to personal growth is quite low.

Sometimes in spite of our best efforts to prevent coercion or the appearance of coercion, prison inmates register in our workshops because they are, or believe they are, under institutional pressure to do so as a condition of parole or for eligibility for institutional privileges. Should this motive become the norm, most of our prison workshops would be unsuccessful. We find, however, that most participants decide very early that they have more to gain from an AVP workshop than a certificate for their parole file. From that point on, their participation is voluntary.

### ***"The process works by itself."***

Over a period of years, AVP has evolved a structure, a process and a set of exercises for workshops that really work. If the leaders stick to the process, the process will work with good leadership, with ordinary leadership and, sometimes, with bad leadership. It has been said any organization can prosper with great and charismatic leadership, but only a great organization can prosper with ordinary leadership. AVP seeks to develop great leaders, but it is not dependent on them.

### ***"The way for the program to grow is to train new leaders."***

#### ***The rest will take care of itself."***

Much of AVP's growth and success is the result of empowering people and training them to be leaders. We believe that anyone who really wants to be a leader can learn to be one. We do not have "star facilitators." We have a team leadership model, which insists that no one conduct an AVP workshop alone because working alone is inconsistent with the team leadership that we consider essential for teaching cooperative behavior patterns. A key function of our lead facilitators is to enable other team members to become better leaders.

### ***"We believe that people learn to be leaders by leading."***

Third in the series of AVP workshops, the Training for Facilitators Workshop teaches people how to lead the Basic Workshop. After completing training, participants are prepared to serve as apprentice facilitators on workshop teams. They begin to learn leadership experientially, by being leaders.

***"The program is blessed with good training manuals."***

In the beginning, AVP flourished and grew miraculously with little structure and no adequate training manuals. Drawing upon human-relations training, individual experiences with such programs as Children's Creative Response to Conflict (CCRC), and using the creativity of our volunteers, we wrote our own training manuals, one for each workshop level. Our leaders now can rely on well-written material to which they may have contributed. The manuals continue to evolve based on the experience of our facilitators.

***"In our organization power seeps up; it does not trickle down."***

Our organizational model is one of building from the grass roots up. This was the approach taken by Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. We believe this approach is essential to nonviolence training.

Our decision-making process is one of consensus. We are wary of too much formalization, and we resist anything that might develop a hierarchy among us. AVP is about community, about acknowledging and encouraging the potential of all of us to grow and develop, and about working together by mutual agreement and without coercion. One way of measuring AVP is by its adherence to these values. If AVP loses sight of them, it will have failed in its mission, no matter how brilliantly it succeeds by any other standards.

***"The true source of nonviolence is spiritual power. We call this Transforming Power."***

AVP leaders recognize that it takes more than mere techniques and skits to defuse nonviolence. The concept of Transforming Power is found in all major religions, and we have AVP leaders who follow a variety of spiritual paths. Facilitators seek to stay in touch with their spiritual power and to allow this power to transform their lives. Transforming Power is the power we have within ourselves to move a situation in a positive direction toward resolution of conflict, or in a negative direction which may end in violence.

***"Local coordinators are the personnel managers that put our womanpower and manpower to work."***

Our system of workshop coordinators for each institution or community is essential to making the program work. The coordinator is a volunteer who is responsible for organizing workshop teams, developing a working relationship with institutions and arranging workshop schedules with an institution or in their community. Most coordinators are active lead facilitators who conduct many workshops themselves and invite others to do the same. Some coordinators are no longer able to facilitate but can still be effective as administrators.

***"The AVP program is a 'win-win-win-win' model."***

*AVP participants, whether in prison or in the community, win* because they get the training they need to cope with violence, both their own and others'.

*AVP facilitators win* because they have an opportunity to develop and improve their leadership skills and to gain new insights about themselves, other people, and a nonviolent life.

*Prison administrators and staff win* by hosting a program that can improve the level of cooperative and nonviolent behavior in their institutions, making their jobs more rewarding.

*Communities win* because community life is enhanced when their members learn new skills to manage violence and gain a new commitment to community life.



# **Chapter 1**

## **GETTING STARTED IN YOUR COMMUNITY**

- **First Steps**
- **Recognition as an Official  
AVP Program**
- **Checklist for Offering  
A Community Workshop**

## FIRST STEPS TO FORMING A LOCAL GROUP

When starting AVP in a new area, two considerations should be uppermost: first, team leadership and, second, program quality and continuity. The group processes that we model in workshops need to be reflected in the way we govern our organization. Our AVP leaders will show respect and caring that helps groups to recognize and deal with problems early and effectively. This attitude will be communicated to workshop participants, prison administrators, and community groups and is a touchstone for our interactions with each other. To ensure program quality and continuity, a solid base of local support and a core of trained facilitators are necessary components.

### Questions to Ask

*For the AVP/USA Committee of Local and Regional Groups (CLARG.)*  
Find local contact - e-mail: [CLARG@avpusa.org](mailto:CLARG@avpusa.org)

- *Is there a local AVP community close by?*
- *Am I alone in my state?*
- *Where can I go to get trained?*
- *Are mentors available to come to our area to train us?*

*For yourself:*

- *Am I prepared to commit the next two to three years to getting a program started?*
- *Who else locally might be interested? Can I get enough locals involved to have some trainers come to us?*
- *What is my interest in doing this?*

### 1. Contact AVP/USA, Inc.

A group wishing to found an AVP program first needs to contact AVP/USA CLARG—Committee of Local and Regional Groups. ([CLARG@avpusa.org](mailto:CLARG@avpusa.org), 888-278-7820) If you have not made arrangements to work with a mentoring group, the national office will put you in touch with an established AVP group that will give you support as you get started. This mentoring process will continue until the new group and their mentors both feel that the new group is ready to function on its own.

### 2. Collect Background Materials

Familiarize yourself and your group with materials that explain the program and its expectations. These include AVP/USA's Policy Statement and Bylaws, which can be found on the national website: <http://avpusa.org> and other AVP websites for additional materials.

### 3. Consider Seeking a Sponsoring Organization

Because of the need for a commitment to an ongoing program, the group needs a reliable source of support and funding. This stability can be provided by a sponsoring organization, such as a Quaker meeting, a church, or a local peace or nonviolence center. The group may further develop stability through forming a steering committee or board of directors.



Because AVP grew out of a cooperative effort among Quakers in the community and men at Green Haven Prison, much of the underlying philosophy and many of the practices of AVP are firmly grounded in the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers); a basic belief that there is good in every person, a commitment to nonviolence, the lack of hierarchy, the consensus decision-making process, etc. Because we believe these values are vital to AVP, we often have found contact with a local Friends Meeting to be mutually beneficial. You may search for Friends Meetings by town or postal code at <http://quakerfinder.org>.

#### **4. Plan a Basic Workshop in the Community**

The first concrete step in getting started in a community is to offer a Basic Workshop.

##### **Why Give Workshops in the Community?**

- To train potential facilitators.
- To train people at-risk so they don't go into prison.
- To reduce the level of violence in a community.
- To provide an opportunity for understanding between a prison and its local community.
- To build financial support for the program.

When a group of interested individuals is ready, plan to hold a Basic Workshop with no fewer than 10 or more than 20 participants. Your mentoring group may provide leadership for the workshop. Each workshop must have a minimum of two facilitators, one of them an experienced facilitator. In workshops having close to 20 participants, it may be preferable to have a team of three or four AVP facilitators.

*See the Checklist for Planning a Community Workshop later in this chapter.*

A full workshop is 18-22 hours. A workshop of fewer than 18 hours is considered to be a mini-workshop and does not lead to a certificate.

##### **Youth Workshop Help**

*There are many unique considerations when starting a youth AVP program. AVP/USA has a Youth Committee which can advise and support you in this regard. The contact information for the committee is available at: <http://avpusa.org>.*

#### **5. Consider Methods of Funding**

Generally, your local group would be expected to pay out-of-pocket expenses, to provide hospitality, and to cover transportation costs for facilitators who come from another area to lead your workshops. In addition, a contribution to the mentoring organization is always appreciated, and may be negotiated with the group providing leadership. AVP/USA has available small seed grants to assist local groups in starting up.

*See Chapter 4 [Appendix](#) - Fundraising, AVP/USA Seed Grants*

AVP/USA Policy is that modest facilitator stipends may be paid for community workshops. This is at the discretion of the Area Council as funding is available. .Workshop donations: You will probably want to request a donation from participants (with scholarships offered in case of need) to cover the costs of your workshop (including food, site rental, workshop supplies and out-of-pocket costs of facilitators.) Rather than a fixed amount, set a range of donation amounts so people with varying incomes have a chance to give what they feel they can afford. Setting a top amount demonstrates the true financial value of the workshop, while the *sliding scale* permits everyone to participate.

Community workshops can be an ongoing source of funding for your new AVP group. As this Organizing Kit is being published, it seems that an average range for an AVP workshop in the USA is between \$25-100.

*See samples of flyers in the Chapter 2 [Appendix](#).*

If you have a sponsoring organization, it may be willing to provide some financial assistance ( cash, in-kind or both). Some individuals and local businesses may be willing to help you as well. Examples of assistance which others have received include free use of workshop space, donated printing for announcements, and meals prepared and served. Be creative and don't be afraid to ask. Grants also are available to support the work of non-violence.

### **Co-Sponsoring an AVP Workshop**

AVP works best in a community setting when there is a local church, community organization or parolee re-entry agency lending its support. It helps considerably for other people than the facilitating team to handle the increased logistics involved with community workshops. These preparations can be very distracting to the workshop facilitating team — just presenting the material takes energy and focus without handling registrations and money, buying food and bringing in chairs and tables, finding hospitality for participants traveling from a distance, etc.

For a successful workshop, ask co-sponsors to:

- Provide a working space  
A room which will comfortably hold up to 20 participants and 4 facilitators seated in a large circle on armless chairs, with room outside the circle for 4 tables. We put up quite a few newsprint charts, so lots of wall space is certainly a plus.
- Promote to its membership and the community  
AVP will provide co-sponsors with master copies of informative brochures, posters, press releases and other printed materials. The co-sponsor's commitment is to let its membership know about the workshop as well as how to enroll. We certainly would urge promoting the workshop to the surrounding community. Our past experience shows that diversity among participants frequently makes for a very satisfying workshop experience. Ideal enrollment is 12 to 20 participants.
- Provide food and beverages for coffee breaks and light meals
- Make financial contributions

## 6. Form a Core Group

All workshops are conducted under the authorization of an AVP Local Group.

Those who have been through the workshop series form the nucleus for the AVP Local Group. These people need to meet periodically to develop a governing structure, monitor the progress and financial status of the program, and plan next steps. Regular meetings also provide a place to share new exercises, variations on ones currently used and new Light and Livelies.

*The responsibilities of Local Groups are listed in the Policy Statement, "Organization of a Local Group" in the Chapter 1 [Appendix](#).*

The Local Group also functions as the conscience of AVP, introducing the standards and ethics of the program, certifying and selecting new facilitators, and keeping the AVP principles in the forefront of running workshops.

As the group grows, a committee or task group structure helps provide a framework for sharing responsibilities and for further expansion. Possibilities include groups for coordinating workshops, maintaining standards and quality in workshops, keeping track of finances, long-range planning, and keeping records of workshops. In the meantime, individuals may need to take on several of these tasks until the group gets rolling.

*See Chapter 4: Keeping your local group going.*

Your Region will ask you to report annually the number, level and type of workshops (prison and/or community) and the number of facilitators. You also will be asked to report on your finances if your non-profit status is under the AVP/USA umbrella.

### Insurance

Some schools, grants, and government agencies may require insurance for those who contract with them to provide services for students and other clients. Partnering with a local group may be the best means for assuring this requirement is reasonably priced and adequate. A rider on their insurance often can handle this request. AVP/USA is not offering this service.

## 7. Train Some Facilitators

In your early planning, you may wish to schedule a second Basic Workshop, an Advanced/Second Level Workshop and a Training for Facilitators (T4F). The timing of these workshops will depend upon the number of interested people, their commitment, the availability of facilitators from your mentoring group or other sources, and your group's ability to pay the costs involved.

## 8. Do Some Long-Range Planning

Where does your group want to be in one year? Three years? Five years? Will you have a community-based program only, or will you want to work in prisons as well? How many workshops per year do you feel are optimum for your area? What kind of organizational structure do you envision to support your program? How will you finance your plans?

## 9. Develop Lead Facilitators

A major hurdle for new groups is developing a sufficient number of lead facilitators. These are facilitators who have enough experience on AVP training teams to be able to support and guide the whole process for each level of workshop from beginning to end.

The certification process is the responsibility of the local group once that group has sufficient experience. Until that time, the mentoring group will assist you by providing lead facilitators and working with you to certify local lead facilitators.

*See the AVP/USA Policy Statement in the Chapter 1 [Appendix](#)*

In some regions the term Team Coordinator is being used instead of Lead in order to reflect more accurately the position and AVP's egalitarian approach toward working with a team.

## RECOGNITION AS AN OFFICIAL AVP PROGRAM

In order to use the name AVP, local groups must agree to adhere to the bylaws and policy statement as adopted by AVP/USA, Inc.

*See **Chapter 1** [Appendix](#)*

These bylaws and policies are a model of AVP both in their content and in the process which was used to adopt them. Indeed, it literally took years to finalize the policies contained in those documents, but they now represent a consensus of regions and local groups throughout the USA. AVP/USA, Inc. is committed to the process of consensus and working through a collaborative structure to provide support for the work of regions and local groups.

Our desire is not to limit access to AVP principles, practices or concepts. Our copyright liberally permits widespread use of our manuals and exercises as long as not for commercial use and for the purpose of conflict resolution training.

*See copyright statement on the rear of the cover page.*

The purpose of the policy statement is to protect the quality of the program. AVP has a number of practices which we believe are integral to our success - bottom lines of who we are. Because AVP groups throughout the USA follow these standards, AVP remains the same program nationwide, even though no two workshops are ever exactly alike. Our policies also insure that actions by one AVP group do not jeopardize the tax-exempt status or the availability of foundation grants for all groups. For example, one AVP group engaging in political action or lobbying could endanger the tax-exempt status of all groups. Also, if one AVP group engaged in discriminatory practices or used the AVP program to proselytize for a particular religious viewpoint, the availability of foundation grants to all AVP groups could be jeopardized, and the reputation of AVP would be damaged.

## CHECKLIST FOR OFFERING AN AVP WORKSHOP

Responsibility for organizing the logistical details works best if it doesn't fall to the lead facilitator, but sometimes it does because that person is most experienced and motivated. The workshop is smoother if a committee from the local group or co-sponsor handles all the logistical arrangements in advance and ensures that the workshop site is prepared. If you are hosting a workshop in a new area with lead facilitators coming from out of town, you will want to negotiate ahead of time which of these responsibilities will be handled by your local group.

See Chapter 1 [Appendix](#) - Guidelines for Facilitating Community Workshops

Organizing workshops requires specific tasks regarding site preparation, recruiting participants, and registration. These tasks are different for community and prison workshops. Divide up these tasks among those on your team.

1. Decide on times, dates, and related meal requirements. If you have a shortage of lead facilitators, you might want to find a lead before you set a date.

### Timing

- *Beware of competition with other programs such as Non-Violent Communication workshops.*
- *Follow general school schedule: holiday times, no December, no three-day weekends, not graduation weeks.*
- *Offer Summer in-service credit for teachers and students*
- *Choose the schedule which best fits your group:*
  - *Friday night, Saturday, Sunday.*
  - *Friday-Saturday and the next Saturday (To get them back, do Yarn Ball as final closing and have each person cut a piece of yarn for to wear on their wrist until they return next week).*
  - *1 to 2 hrs a week/ twice a week for 10 weeks, using homework assignments. (works well with young people)*
  - *2-1/2 hrs a week for 30 weeks to complete all workshops.*
  - *Midweek workshops.*
- *Consider starting Sunday workshop day after noon to allow for churches to donate their space and for their congregants to attend.*

2. Create a budget for the workshop to be sure you have sufficient funds for all out-of-pocket expenses (include food, materials, site, facilitators' expenses, flyers, mailing).
3. Choose a qualified lead facilitator and then work with that person to select team members. The lead facilitator will set up times for team building prior to the workshop and create the agenda and reproduce copies for each team member.

## Composing the Team

The team of an AVP workshop adds credibility to the workshop, especially if the team includes someone from the group to which you are offering the workshops, such as a youth when it is for teens.

Find out who is available and discuss the team with the lead facilitator. Diversity on the team strengthens the workshop — be this intergenerational, socio-economic, educational, personality (not all introvert or extrovert), gender, formerly incarcerated, gay, ethnicity and race.

Seek out a vibrant team of varied backgrounds, lifestyles and experience. All are aspects that you could include, but each one does not need to be represented.

If you find you are ending up with a small group of participants, a large team (a maximum of six) can augment this, giving new facilitators a chance to participate.

### 4. Decide who will be the Registrar.

#### What a Workshop Registrar Does[

The person who volunteers to be registrar needs to be someone other than the lead and should be someone organized, computer savvy and willing to take phone calls prior to the workshop.

- Provides a contact number and e-mail address to be included on the workshop flyer and on your website; regularly monitor these and promptly respond.
  - Answers questions, awards scholarships, readily and generally helps people who call or e-mail. In addition to help with registration, some participants may need assistance with transportation, including bus fare.
  - Maintains a complete list of names, and contact information for those who have registered by mail or e-mail or who made contact indicating an interest in taking the workshop.
  - E-mails or mails confirmations to those who have registered, with information about the workshop.
  - Contacts everyone who has signed-up by e-mail or phone to confirm their participation. Best done during the last week prior to the workshop.
  - Arrives at the workshop 15-30 minutes early to welcome people, checks names on the list and accepts payments as appropriate.
  - Takes lunch and dinner orders as needed.
  - Creates a final list for the team and participants to take home. •
- Saves the names of those who didn't come but were interested.

Use for the local council's list of potential future workshop participants.

5. Design a flyer.

*(samples are in the Chapter 2 [Appendix](#).)*

A range of donation/fee (giving people an option while putting value on the workshop) plus readily offering free attendance works best.

6. Find a room which will comfortably hold up to 20 participants and four facilitators seated in a large circle on armless chairs, with room outside the circle for four to six tables. Lots of wall space is certainly a plus for our newsprint records. *(Free rooms may often be found in churches, retirement communities, mobile home parks, colleges, etc.)*
7. Reserve the room for an hour or so before the workshop each day for the team building session prior to the workshop and for the debrief/evaluation afterwards.
8. Plan and arrange light meals and snacks. Some find it easiest to order sandwiches for lunch because there are always people who forget to bring their lunch and want to go out to get something, and you lose valuable workshop time. Make it easy on yourself and order food; don't plan to prepare the food unless you have a local group that wants to do this as their service to AVP. For dinner we often call in for pizza and whip up a salad to serve with it. Plan very few sweets in liquid or solid form as it affects the group's energy, although cookies or ice cream are a nice pick-me-up in the afternoon or after dinner.  
*See Chapter 1 [Appendix](#): Food for Community Workshops..*
9. Communicate with the lead facilitator to determine meal delivery times in relation to the workshop schedule.
10. Arrange for overnight hospitality in homes or motels near the workshop site for out-of-town facilitators and participants in a community workshop, and arrange daily transportation if they will be arriving by public transportation. Requesting a special rate with motels is generally easy when you explain what AVP does. Since some people are uncomfortable with staying in someone's home, motels need to be considered as an option.

### **Handling Hospitality Requests as Simply as Possible**

The easiest way to handle hospitality needs and keep the cost under control is for someone in your group to arrange overnight hospitality at someone's home if this is acceptable to the guest. When arranging hospitality in homes, it is essential to talk to the guest to see if they have any specific needs such as allergies, accessibility issues or pet dog fears. Make sure the host can meet these needs. Give the host and guest information on each other, including their cell phone numbers. Suggest they make contact and leave it to them.

If the guest has difficulty staying in someone's home, arrange and pay for a room at a local motel that is within the budget of the workshop. If the guest wants to make these arrangements personally, be sure the budget for overnight accommodations is clearly communicated.



11. Provide for meals or out-of-pocket expenses for the team , including transportation and duplicating costs.
12. Be present at the start of the workshop to assure everything is okay. Leave a contact number and any other information for the team should a problem arise. Checking in with them is reassuring.
13. Assemble materials. In most areas the lead facilitator carries necessary materials in a kit, the contents of which are listed in the Basic Manual.
14. Prepare certificates for workshop graduates. Though some in the community will not feel this is necessary, you never know when someone in the workshop will find it valuable for their job or resume.

See Chapter 1 [Appendix](#): the Value of Certificates.

### **Pointers that Keep Community Workshops Fun and Meaningful**

1. Advise participants early on: "Put away your notebooks. This is your retreat. Even if you plan on facilitating, it is most important to experience what this first workshop is like as a participant. Don't try to psyche it out; just let go and have fun and learn about yourself. If you want the exercises, you can purchase a manual at the end of the workshop."
2. Refrain from telling participants how much better the prison workshops are, but do give them little vignettes about what it is like to facilitate in a prison.
3. Expect that your team may have a meltdown when the social workers or teachers in the group start telling you what you are doing wrong. Just keep the team focused on staying with the process because in an hour or two it will all be back on track.
4. Community participants love to stay in their heads. Refocus them on staying with their feelings and don't get into long discussions over things. Keep it moving.
5. Get them to deepen the experience soon after the first session with gatherings that hit home. For example: the first time I remember violence, how my family handled conflict, or the scariest time in my life.
6. Don't give up *Light and Livelies* because the discussion got going and you don't think you have time. Remember, it isn't a discussion group; it is a workshop. Frequent *Hurricanes may* help to keep the workshop from becoming too intellectual.
7. Be careful about playing to one or two people's needs. They rarely represent the group.
8. Love them for showing up; maybe some day they will facilitate with you.



# **Chapter 2:**

## **FINDING PEOPLE TO TAKE BASIC WORKSHOPS**

- **What You Really Need to Know about Recruitment**
- **Timeline**
- **Mini-workshops**
- **Flyers**
- **Electronic Assistance**
- **Tracking Your Success**

This is the part where many people may give up, because it may take speaking to 20 groups to get 20 workshop participants. You can still have an effective prison program without an active community workshop schedule. You miss the community youth & the opportunity to see diverse parts of your community come together.

In order for an AVP program to begin and grow, finding people to take Basic workshops is a crucial priority. Most AVP facilitators don't like the whole idea of promotion or recruitment, and so are likely to pass right over this chapter. If you have reached this section, stay with it and look for ideas that you might feel comfortable implementing. You don't need to start from scratch; much work has already been done for you, but you will need to commit some time to this.

Remember that you are giving people the opportunity of their lifetimes not only to grow but to be appreciated as a volunteer. You are offering a gift, but don't become disheartened if they don't always appreciate it.

## What You Really Need to Know about Recruitment

***The usual marketing methods generally do not work, though some basic principles still apply:***

- Personal contact is primary to finding interested participants. Meet with groups, offer mini-workshops, and talk to people. If you read no further, you now know the big secret to recruiting workshop participants.
- Get yourself into as many churches and organizations as possible. If you recruit one person from each group, you are doing well.
- Carry flyers about upcoming workshops wherever you go.
- Consider why someone might want to take a workshop or volunteer as a facilitator in a prison or school. Ask fellow facilitators what motivated them initially. Build your materials to describe how AVP workshops meet the facilitators' needs: helping others, personal growth, family members in prison, working with youth, etc.
- Keep track of interested people - this list is gold to you. Keep an ongoing list. In advertising, it is said that you need to contact someone seven times before they buy.
- Cooperate with other groups either as a sponsor or to bring in several people. The more involved a sponsorship you can get from a local church, youth group, or peace center, the more help you will get with recruiting.
- Don't spend a lot of time on developing or distributing materials, because the individual contact is the most important. Use the materials as back up to the conversation.
- Keep track of what works for your community specifically, or all this is for naught.
- Personal contact is primary to finding interested participants. "Witness" about AVP to your friends. (Yes, it is important enough that we say it again.) All the facilitators in your local group need to see this as their responsibility.



### **Publicity**

Don't spend a lot of time on this as generally it is not as successful as you expect. (*think FREE including:* )

- PSAs(public service announcements) on radio; create a script for them to read
- Public radio - offer a free workshop series during pledge weeks
- Letters to the editor
- Local TV - use AVP video with an added number to contact locally

### **Ombs**

What hasn't worked very well for many :

- Flyers - posted
- Announcements in church bulletins
- Going to the church to speak to the pastor and sending flyers (Better to meet with a church group.)
- Talk Shows except on NPR
- Announcements on TV Shows
- Mention in magazines
- Newspaper articles

*Stay tuned for ideas that DO work in the rest of this chapter*

## **Timeline**

Allowing enough lead time not only to get what needs to be done for workshop arrangements but to allow participants to plan the workshop into their lives means using a timeline to guide your group's planning. This helps to keep everyone on the same page and to increase the diversity of the workshop. Below is a start, but check the Chapter 2 [Appendix](#) for a more detailed and helpful timeline which includes ways to recruit diverse workshop participants.

## **Planning your workshop**

With few exceptions many have found that spending about an hour a week will be sufficient to plan a workshop. If you schedule that hour and stick to it, this will be easier than it appears, and it won't hang over your head all the time. It helps to establish the practice of teamwork by dividing the work among other team-members.

### **12 Weeks in Advance of Workshop:**

Find site and team, design and print flyer, brainstorm people and organizations to contact, put information on website, tell other facilitators in state. See the Chapter 2 [Appendix](#) "Ideas of groups to contact" for additional groups or individuals that might energize your brainstorm. Contact only those people whom you know or to whom you have been referred. Ask friends for referrals to groups you don't know but would like to.

### **A BUSINESS CARD**

Canadian AVP has a fold-over business card:

Front: "There's always another way[ ]"

Inside: Details of what AVP is.

Back: Contact information.

AVP/California offers business cards for personal use by facilitators (they pay the nominal cost). The Cards have the Guides to Transforming Power on the back. The same card with the organization contact information is handed out at graduations.

## **Annapolis Community Outreach**

We have worked for more than 6 months in the planning phase alone to bring AVP to the Annapolis MD community starting with our introductions to our community networks. Personal touch, the only thing that seemed to work.

*See sample flyers in the Chapter 2 [Appendix](#).*

The results tell us to invite the stakeholders, the public and private entities who would like to partner with us. What we're learning, more specifically, is their interest in taking the AVP concepts to use them in their own venues. Getting individuals to be interested in AVP for personal reasons was quite a stretch and would not have yielded sufficient numbers to have 20-hr trainings (except from the Quaker community that sponsored these trainings).

"Mini" theme-related intros, possibly even as short as 90 minutes work best for maximum exposure and visibility.

In any event, we carefully designed our presentations with the goal of recruiting partners and getting AVP into the community-with integrity-however we could. An additional goal was to train people to come into the prisons here. There's been interest in that as well. It's too soon yet to see the long-term results of what we've set into motion, but here are stats:

### **Results:**

- 1. Offered three intros with a total of approx 70 people. The first two had about 15 each; the third had 40 people. The latter came from a community-active black church with high-risk populations and multiple programs of their own. So don't let quantity confuse you with quality in reaching your target goal(s).*
- 2. Held two 20-hour Basics (one during the week, the other on a weekend) with about twelve per workshop*
- 3. Just had our first Advanced (midweek with 10 participants, all of whom are ready to do the T4F (probably in a prison unless we can guarantee enough participants to schedule time for a community workshop)*
- 4. 100% from the weekend Basic are interested in an Advanced. (We have not committed to doing a community weekend Advanced since those interested can do that in the prison.)*

The focus of the mini-workshop is on personal goals throughout, telling the participants once they had their own AVP experience, they could translate that experience to their staff and clients. A key part is letting them know they can use these exercises and the AVP philosophy in their work as they see fit. Encourage all participants—theirs and ours — to do a full 20-hr workshop; but if it's not practical, then do mini-workshops. People love seeing they can have flexibility with this.

We now facilitate each month in the MCI-J (Jessup MD men's prison) and also have spearheaded these Annapolis community workshops. Having the Annapolis Friends Meeting's full support and having them tap their long-held relationships here shows me that personal contact (and history) is the only way to make AVP work in the community.

*See Chapter 2 [Appendix](#) for mini-workshop agendas and ideas.*

## **11 Weeks in Advance of the Workshop:**

Begin calling people identified above, making appointments to meet with organizations; collect names and contact information of people who might contact others.

### **What One Person Has Done to Recruit for the Latest Workshop**

1. Prepare flyers as soon as possible and e-mail them to whomever I know.
2. I carry the flyers with me, and when I attend another workshop or event, I ask for a few minutes to announce the workshop. (Three times.)
3. I suggested taking the workshop to only to a few of my friends. Only one has.
4. There's a local monthly newspaper that has a progressive calendar that I send the announcements to. (I've received only one call from that.)
5. I've stopped at a local church, and just left a note with the flyers when I didn't see anyone there.
6. There's a B.O.N.D. organization office (focusing on black males) near my home, and I spoke to someone there. (I will go again and tell them that they can use our processes in their work)
7. I've asked two friends to post flyers on a listserve that serves a spiritual/business community.
8. My husband provided a list of people who stopped by our booth at an Ex-Offenders Job Fair, and I've called and e-mailed them. (I don't know if I've received any sign-ups from those.)
9. I spoke at a meeting of a workshop participant. (Only 5 people there. Three people signed up. Only 1 attended.)
10. I have been the registrar and responded to calls and e-mails. (Not that many.)

## **4-10 Weeks in Advance of the Workshop:**

Continue calling and contacting one hour a week.

### **Making an Effective Recruitment Visit**

Phone those on your recommended contact list, which you have gleaned from others. Use the name of the recommender when calling to schedule an appointment, preferably in person, otherwise by phone when you both have at least 30 minutes. If after your conversation, the person is not interested at this time, ask if an acquaintance might be interested. Get the contact information and ask if you can use the name of the person to whom you are speaking when making contact. Also ask if you can e-mail your contact to send future workshop information for the agency staff or organization members.

"You cannot imagine the number of people that I have contacted repeatedly for workshops who thank me profusely for reminding them and for having patience with their lives, who actually end up taking the workshop." Remember it takes seven contacts[

## **Within 2-4 weeks of the workshop**

E-mail or deliver the confirmation with the directions to the workshop and any final details, such as what to wear, arrangements for meals, facilitators' names, the time to arrive, etc. Even though it is on the flyer or if you have sent a confirmation previously, many people may have lost it or just forgotten.

### **Committing Sign-up/ Preventing Dropout**

- Put a deadline on the flyer.
- Indicate "Limited space" on promotions
- Ask people to pay up front or at least send in registration form.
- Call those who have signed up shortly before the workshop to check they have all information.
- Tell them there is still room in the workshop, in case they have a friend they want to bring.

## **The Week Before the Workshop**

Personally call all the people you have as a possibility, and check that they are still planning to come. Let them know that you are counting on them showing up to make the workshop a success.

## **During the Workshop**

Encourage participants to contact their friends. Provide flyers for the next workshop. Circulate a sign up sheet for them to sign up for the next level.

### **Workshop Participants Recruiting for You**

Our goal was to bring AVP into the community. We've tailored all of the presentations and workshops toward that goal, using that last two hours of the 20-hr workshops -- with brainstorming -- to have them think where and how they would use AVP.

## After the Workshop

- Recruiting for one workshop is only the beginning for the next one.
- Compile your lists for the next workshop.
- Be sure every participant has every other participant's name and contact information, to maintain that community mentioned earlier and so you can let them know when to send their friends to the next workshop.
- Create a potential attendee list as your own database of future attendees. Save the names and e-mails of interested people who didn't come, as well as those who attended and want to continue.
- Update your lists: For future Basic workshops, save the names and e-mails of interested people who didn't attend this one.
- Develop an ongoing list of those who attended each workshop, indicating who wants to continue on, thus creating your own list of future attendees for the Advanced/Second Level workshop

### Show Me the Money

AVPers are not always comfortable with getting the money, but it is the best way to assure that an individual will actually show up at a workshop. Always encourage people to register early so they have a spot. Even if they need a scholarship, ask them to send in the registration form anyhow. If you are providing lunch and dinner, mention to people who ask for scholarships that if possible a contribution for food would be appreciated. When you receive a registration, e-mail or mail a confirmation with another flyer asking them if they have a friend, as there is still room. Remember that this money goes to support the good work of AVP.

## Mini-workshops

Mini- workshops are a powerful means for introducing people to AVP. The group might be a collection of different people or a group from one organization. For all the ins and out of how to offer mini-workshops, including an agenda.

*see Chapter 2 [Appendix](#): Mini-workshops.*

## Flyers

A flyer is your primary promotional material other than your mouth and e-mail. Your flyer is your back up for these other means of outreach. You can attach it to an e-mail or carry it with you wherever you go to give to people.

Design your flyer to reach people you want to take the workshop. Though most of us believe that anyone could become a facilitator, the fact is some people are easier to locate and train. (For example: If you want people who can facilitate in prisons for a weekend, you may want to re-think offering child care so they can take the workshop, because people with young children can rarely to get away to facilitate for long periods of time.)



## Headline

The headline for a workshop flyer should respond to the needs of the audience being appealed to. Unfortunately AVP as a title is not so good at recruiting people because they don't know the acronym of AVP, or the average citizens don't think of themselves as violent, so they think they don't need this workshop.

### Look at These Titles to Determine Who Might Respond to Them.

- "Cultivating the spirit of non-violence"
- "Learn a new way[ ..  
to make a real difference in our community"
- "Dealing with conflict in your classroom?  
Finally a workshop with fun, practical skills to pass on to your students."
- "Making friends with conflict"
- "Butting heads?"
- "Creating Peace"
- "A neighborhood without violence?!"  
[ this is the first step"
- "Looking for a new challenge in our lives?"

Notice they are concise unless a clarifying tagline adds to the initial "hook" line. Stay away from lines that are philosophical only.

### What Should Be on a Flyer

KISS (Keep It Simple Sweetie) is the byword for flyer copy. Most people will use it to find the dates, location and how much it costs, so be sure to include the usual basic information and make those three items easy to find. Be sure to include:

#### Who:

Describing the organization briefly with a website reference gives a basis of the experience you bring. For example:

*ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT offers (AVP) conflict resolution workshops in prisons, the community, or the classroom. AVP, begun in 1975 as a cooperative project between prisoners and Quakers, is active worldwide including Rwanda among Hutus and Tutsis.*

"Who" might also include a focus on youth or be the place to recognize the sponsoring group.

#### Why:

This links you with the potential participants and what their motivations for taking the workshop might be.

#### What:

Just a brief description of the experience without the jargon of AVP. (For example: Affirmation, Communication, Cooperation, seem like pretty generic words. Without the experience, however, these words become jargon that the prospective participant can't identify, and which may therefore feel are unnecessary.

Try:

*ENJOY a hands-on, experiential, conflict resolution workshop where you'll connect deeply with others, laugh, share, and listen while learning ways to reduce conflict in your classroom, your family, at work or in the world. Meet people of different cultures in your town.*

- \* Take no notes. Come prepared to discover new ways of approaching disagreement.*
- \* Treat yourself to this workshop purely for personal growth, or make it a first step toward facilitating additional workshops.*

When:

Include days, dates and times; people need to plan their lives. Also, list a deadline for registering. This will be the date on which you decide if you have enough people to make it a go. You can keep on registering after this date.

Where:

As well as giving information, listing the name of the location can make a statement about your sponsorship. For example, if you are trying to reach a more diverse group of participants, it is important to say you are holding your workshop at local Native American or the African American Cultural Center.

If you don't have a place yet, indicate that the location will be sent with the confirmation. Sometimes you will be offered the use of a place by listing this on the flyer.

In today's world you need only list the address; you can provide detailed instructions on your confirmation. Many people will use a web map or have a GPS.

Cost:

"Suggested donation" is a more accurate term than "fee", since you will plough any income back into the local group's workshops. Use a sliding scale (indicate a range) as well as "scholarship" (*aka: No one turned away*) to make the workshop more widely accessible.

Graphics/images:

Simple graphics make the flyer more interesting and can be done with boxes, boldface type, italics and highlighting. If you have a good graphic that doesn't take an hour to download, try it and see what response you get, but don't stress over finding one.

No need to create a complicated two-fold brochure; a single sheet works just fine.

Contact Person:

List a contact person by name (first name only is fine) including that person's phone and e-mail. You might set up a separate e-mail for this (e.g., AVPreRegistrar@myaddress.com) so others can access it when you are out of town.

Registration Form:

Include a small tear-off registration form on the flyer with an address where people can send their money and registration.

### Miscellaneous:

"Space is limited to 20 people; reserve early. Facilitation team includes: from NY, John Smith a facilitator with 15 years experience, and Maria Gonzalez from our town", etc. Use this when listing the facilitator will give credibility in a wider community.

### The Back of the Flyer...

... is the place for all the additional information you want to say, such as how AVP works, what it takes to become a facilitator, or what is happening locally.

#### **Great Quotes from Community Workshops Can Add Meaning to Your Flyers. Collect Them.**

##### ***Here Is a Start:***

- *"My relationship with my daughter turned around after this workshop."*
- *"The simple basics of communication that I had forgotten came alive in this workshop."*
- *"I can't believe I could have so much fun and learn so much about myself."*

##### **Past participants appreciated:**

- *"interaction with diverse and interesting group members."*
- *"study of my 'buttons' and ways to deactivate them."*
- *"frequent variation of pace and activity in workshops." •  
"increased my willingness to listen and not pre-judge a person or a situation."*

## **Electronic Assistance**

Because AVP is a very personal organization, at first you may not think to access the electronic support that can assist you. The web offers you increasing opportunities to simplify and economically broaden your outreach. Here are a few to start with.

<http://www.volunteermatch.org/>

This website is a good resource for recruiting workshop participants. Free or requiring a nominal fee, this easy-to-use site can add potential people to your workshop list. Don't expect to be able to fill a workshop, but you might round out a workshop using this resource.

### **Website**

By asking the initial members of your group you can find an adult or teenager who can create a web page that can provide information about your program as well as link you to others involved with AVP. Take some time to look at others' websites and decide what you want to include in yours. Don't hesitate to "borrow" wording or ideas or link to another site, especially <http://avpusa.org>— where you want to be sure your group and workshops are listed.

## **Social Contact Groups**

Google Groups, Facebook and other internet social offer your group a central contact point where you can upload and download flyers and other materials that you want to make available to everyone. These networks can also be used as your collective e-mail list where any group member can access the group and e-mail the whole facilitator list. Also, use these networks to collect names of potential participants. Use of the internet taps another generation of possible facilitators.

One Area AVP Council has a members-only Google Group, which they use as an internal communication tool for the council. New facilitators are invited to become members of the group. "We use the group to manage e-mail correspondence and store documents. For example, we post the minutes of our council meetings as Pages and store shared documents as Files. Examples of some of the files are flyers we have used and contact lists from workshops. Occasionally, we use the Discussions feature to communicate on specific topics."

## **E-mail List**

Consider saving the information of two different types of contacts: people who have indicated an interest in taking the workshop; and contact people at organizations/agencies who have e-mail lists and are willing to send out your workshop information.

Very important: When you are doing a mass e-mailing, remember to put all the recipients on the "BCC" line so you don't disclose people's names and e-mail addresses to a group of strangers.

### **E-mail Success**

Our group has its own computer and database, and we have found over the past year that e-mail in our area has hit a certain "critical mass." We organized a number of full Basic Workshops last year and just about all of the organization it was done via e-mail. We make sure that when we have inquiries we always take down the e-mail address as well as other contact details. When a workshop venue and date are confirmed, we simply compile an e-mail address list and with the click of a button are able to inform all those with an e-mail address (which at the moment is about 300 addresses - and growing fast). For a volunteer organization, this is remarkable. It is incredibly low-cost and so much easier than a mass postal mailing (printing, folding, stamping, posting etc.) or dividing up groups of people to phone. Of course, you have to make sure that people who do not have access to e-mail are also kept informed!

# Tracking Your Success

The fun part of recruitment is keeping track of what works. Every community is different and every community changes, so it likely to be different two years from today in terms of who might be interested in AVP.

Take a step back every once in a while (annually?) to look at what you have learned about recruitment. Try to do this as a group and keep questioning among yourselves. Try some of these questions:

- From what source did we get the most participants?
- Can that source continue to be contacted or is there another similar one, for example, Unity Church?
- How many of those who took workshops are eager to go on to the next workshop or go into the prison? From what group or approach do they come from?
- How did present facilitators and Training for Facilitators workshop grads hear about AVP and what convinced them to move beyond the Basic workshop?
- Are you recruiting from the wrong population to increase your facilitator base, or do participants take the workshop primarily for other purposes?

If you evaluate all the effort put into finding people to take the workshop, and with an open mind consider what worked and what bombed, you are less likely to keep making the same mistakes and will learn where to better spend your future efforts.

## Swirl?!

Create enough activity/uproar to attract attention. People go where other people are, so one-on-one doesn't work in all situations. In a local Quaker meeting or church, this swirl can be generated by repeated announcements, people sharing experiences, having literature available, having people who have taken the workshop identify themselves in a meeting, and doing fundraisers.

Think of outreach as involving "swirl." It's like feeding fish splashing around in the water. When folks get busy signing up, they talk with their friends. When you talk with someone who wants to do the workshop, ask if they know of someone else who is thinking about doing it, or someone they would really love to have in the workshop.

At council meetings or even in e-mailed status reports to the council, point out, often, that if each of us enrolls even one person we will have the workshop.

# **Chapter 3**

## **GETTING STARTED IN A PRISON**

- **Basic Requirements**
- **Initial Contacts for  
Getting into Prison**
- **Meeting with  
Prison Officials**
- **Details of Setting up a  
Workshop in Prison**
- **Who Should Be Invited  
to the First Workshop**
- **Before Every Workshop**
- **Through the Eyes of  
Long-time Facilitators**
- **After the Workshop**



## **Basic Requirements Before Establishing a Prison Program**

You or your local group should consider offering a workshop in a prison *only* if you are able to support an ongoing program there. This means that there is a Lead Facilitator and at least one or two other facilitators or apprentices who can come to the prison on a fairly regular basis. AVP's credibility will suffer if workshops are started but are unable to continue because of lack of qualified outside personnel to carry them on.

## **Initial Contacts for Getting into Prisons**

Getting AVP into a prison may take considerable groundwork. Start wherever seems most appropriate or where you have contacts in the system, then go forward as the way opens.

### **A prison program can get started in many ways:**

1. Sometimes community AVPers take the initiative.
2. A request may come from a prisoner or group of prisoners.
3. A request may come from someone within the administration at a particular prison or in the state Department of Corrections.
4. A request may come from an outside organization interested in or already involved in prison work.

What to do differs in each case, so we will take them one by one. The goal is to get a meeting with prison officials, preferably including the Superintendent or Warden, and agree on a plan for setting up a program of AVP Workshops.

### **1. An AVP Group Wishes to Set Up Workshops in Prison**

Whenever possible, look for contacts in the state Department of Corrections or at an individual prison. This could be someone involved in inmate services, chaplaincy, or the administration. If someone in your group knows an inmate, this may also open up possibilities, especially if the inmate sees how valuable AVP would be in the prison. Write this incarcerated person a letter to see if s/he would be interested in following the steps outlined below for an inmate request. If no one in the local group knows the prison scene or has experience talking with prison officials, you might consider importing someone, such as a member of the AVP/USA Committee of Local and Regional Groups (CLARG) to be at your first the conference with the administration.

### **2. A Request from an Inmate or Group of Inmates**

Responding to a request from an inmate is a good way for an AVP program to start. Often inmates can more readily catch the attention of prison staff they see every day. Clarify what AVP is all about by sending a brochure and other literature. You may wish to include a copy of the introduction to this kit, "What is the Alternatives to Violence Project?" Make sure these inside enthusiasts understand that 10 to 20 inmates are needed for a workshop and that they must be volunteers.



Inform inmates that we cannot initiate a program in the prison until there are AVP in the area that can continue to service the program. If there is not already a local group, you will need to look for an organization or person who can organize workshops in the community to create a pool of AVP facilitators. This delay means the inmates must have some patience while offering their help. Look for any kind of prisoner support group in the community, or a church or group interested in or already working in the prison. You may wish to contact a Friends Meeting or office of the American Friends Service Committee in the region to solicit their interest, since they may already be aware of AVP. Send them a brochure or other promotional literature available from the national office or on the website: <http://avpusa.org>.

If you have people ready to go in to facilitate, encourage the inmates to:

- Talk to other inmates and get commitments from 12 to 20 of them to take a Basic Workshop, including being present at all sessions over the three days, whenever arrangements can be made for such a workshop.
- Actively seek inmate AVP facilitators, who may have been transferred from other prisons.
- Take the matter up with the prison administration, pointing out that a group of inmates are eager to take AVP training and that AVP is prepared to come in with a workshop as soon as details can be worked out.
- Request that the administration contact the local AVP group to arrange for a conference.

If the inmates run into difficulties with any of the above, they should pass the name and title of the official to contact for a meeting on to the local AVP group. As the negotiations proceed, the inmates who made the request should be kept informed about what is happening, if possible by including them in all meetings with the administration.

*See Prisoner Collection in the index for possible materials to explain AVP and the prison relationship to inmates.*

### **3. A Request from the Prison Administration or State Department of Corrections Official**

If a request comes at the state level and AVP is already involved in prisons there, you will need to answer questions and detail AVP's present involvement and its possible plans for working in other state institutions. You may wish to arrange to meet the official to talk more about his/her particular interest. If you decide to arrange such a meeting, make sure that all local AVP groups in your state have an opportunity to be represented at that meeting. If the request comes from another state, you should refer it to the national office or to your regional contact. If the request comes from an employee at a specific prison you should basically follow the same procedure. If you believe that you will be able to provide AVP to that prison, take extra steps to ensure the quality and standards of AVP by encouraging inmate participation in the planning stages as early as possible. You may find an inmate organization (such as a Jaycees chapter, Men's Advisory Council or religious service group) that would be willing to participate in AVP's first efforts.

### **4. Request from an Outside Organization**

If you get a request from an outside group to start AVP in a prison, great! Tell them what's involved, and that they will need to develop a core of facilitators to carry it off. Get the group to host a mini or other introductory session to get people turned on, and then sign them up for a workshop!

## 5. Starting AVP in a New State

When starting a program in a new state, be extremely careful to follow the AVP policies as described in the [Appendix](#) without exception. Your example will influence any future local groups' reception in the system and will have a lasting impact on AVP's reputation in your region.

### Starting from the Top

When AVP/California was founded in 2005, the state had for 12 years had several unrelated prison AVP programs functioning off and on in different prisons. By that time, for various reasons of politics and ethical lapses (outside volunteers "involved" with inmates, and inmate misuse of power) the program was only functioning in two or three facilities. In one of those facilities it had taken four years and working through multiple layers of bureaucracy to get a program started; in another, a youth facility, the only way the group could go in was to agree to bring in meals for all 20 young men for the weekend workshops, (which only were offered intermittently), and volunteers faced extraordinary restrictions.

Outside workshops were cranking out facilitators, but no prisons were available in which they could practice their new skills. The Friends Committee on Legislation of California, a Quaker lobbying group arranged an appointment with Jeanne Woodford, the new Director of Adult Facilities, for a presentation on the benefits of AVP. (Another state might find that a friendly legislator could open this door.) As it turned out, she was at San Quentin when AVP was active for four years, had seen the results on the yard. She knew exactly what AVP was and called it "awesome." She invited a group of facilitators to her quarterly all-wardens' meeting to introduce them to the program. Three experienced facilitators did a mini-workshop with Elephants and Palm Trees, Concentric Circles and the usual history and impressive reduction-in-violence-and-recidivism statistics. Of the 33 wardens present, 22 signed up. The door was opened, and four years later AVP/CA is in 18 facilities and is known throughout the Dept. of Corrections as a dependable and desirable program to have in "your" prison.

Though California had an introduction to the Director of Adult Facilities, you should feel encouraged to make an appointment directly with your top state administrator to present the impressive record of AVP around the country and the world. Experience has shown that when introducing the program into a new prison, it is also important to require an initial meeting with the Warden and whomever he/she wants to include. This can make a big difference in the "juice" (informal influence) your group will have once inside, especially if the warden handpicks the person who will be working with you.

### Meeting with Prison Officials

If you or your group may be able to service the facility, arrange a meeting with key administration people in the prison: the Warden or Assistant Warden and the Chaplain or the Volunteer Activities Coordinator. Your ability to keep the program functioning well is likely to be eased by warden support. If meeting on a state level, the rest of the section also is true. Remember these individuals are your peers, so feel comfortable in preparing and leading this meeting. You are bringing a program that literally can improve the lives and the safety of the officers on the yard.

### **Materials to Send Prior to Meetings**

Prison officials' time is valuable, just like yours, so develop a packet of information to send to them in advance of meetings. This packet can also be useful for communicating with other individuals or groups interested in AVP. Include:

- A cover letter describing the benefits, and history of AVP  
(See Chapter 3 [Appendix](#) for samples).
- A list of AVP materials.
- A brief summary of research on AVP workshops.
- Quotes from other prison officials and from inmates who have taken AVP.
- AVP/USA Policy on Relationship between the facility and the AVP local group.
- Your additional requirements for offering the program.

Include at least two facilitators in your group. Meet beforehand to decide on your agenda and roles (for example: who will be note-taker, who will take the lead, who will describe history etc.) In this conference, use your AVP skills—particularly listening. Listen to any concerns expressed about setting up such a program. Offer to help in any way that does not violate AVP ideals and methods. On the other hand, do not give in to demands for abbreviated workshops or sacrifice other elements that are integral to AVP work. Emphasize your commitment to protecting the integrity of AVP methods and organization.

### **Possible Agenda:**

- Arrive early. Bring multiple copies of the information already sent for those who haven't already seen it. Likewise, don't leave out a basic introduction to the program and its benefits in your spoken presentation because not everyone will know this, and besides repetition never hurts.
- As people arrive, find out and write down their names and job titles. If possible, find out their job responsibilities as part of the welcoming discussion.
- Introduce yourselves, and include your experience with AVP and your professional experience (Don't be shy [ you are making an important impression).
- Present AVP's history, its worldwide impact, and explain that it started in collaboration with inmates.
- Share research statistics on how AVP reduces recidivism and violence in prisons.
- Give a vignette or example of what happens in a workshop, to demonstrate AVP's highly participatory nature.

Once you have their interest, define the requirements:

- That AVP offers three levels of workshops.
- Each workshop, requires 18-22 hours of contact time, plus planning and debriefing time.
- That AVP has policies and procedures: i.e. that staff not be present, that workshops be offered to all inmates and that all participants be volunteers.
- That one intent is to develop inmate who will work on teams with outside facilitators, and that this apprenticing is required.

## Offering Community Members the Chance To Take Workshops in Prison

Many institutions are willing to have new volunteers trained with their inside participants, improving the quality of the workshop for all. Inside participants seem particularly glad to share their workshops with those coming in for the experience. Experience suggests that this should be put on your initial list of requirements when meeting with prison staff.

The prison officials may decide at this conference to move ahead with a pilot program, or they may wish to read the literature and further study how it might be set up. If the former, they will most likely assign someone to work out the details with AVP. You will then work with this person to develop plans for the first workshop, as outlined in the next section.

## The Details of Setting up a Workshop in Prison

Once you have the administration's go-ahead, it is time to work out the details for getting the workshops started. How well these details are laid out and communicated will set the tone for the future of the program.

Once a commitment is made, your concrete arrangements with the prison should include the following:

*(See **Index** for additional checklists)*

- Dates and times for each session structured with the prison around meals, counts and staff schedules. Include time for teambuilding and debriefing with inside facilitators, even if you don't have any trained yet.
- Facilities: A room large enough for 26 people in a circle, armless chairs, tables, an easel or blackboard and adequate wall space, fans (in summer) and any other items you might need.
- Arrangements for bringing in workshop materials and a list of items required to be cleared for entry.
- Any agreements made with the prison when the program was set up, such as: outcounts for inside facilitators and participants.
- Arrangements for meals. It is usually preferable for these to be brought into the workshop for both inmates and outside personnel.
- Arrangements for facilitators to get the call-out list before the workshops with inmate numbers, to allow your AVP group prepare a sign-in sheet, and keep track of the participants.
- Security information on the volunteers to be provided to the prison for entrance into the facility, as well as prison's security requirements, which may include volunteer orientation, TB tests, and fingerprinting.
- Copies of the institutional guidelines or regulations for volunteers and their communication to the volunteers going into the prison. For possible materials see *Chapter 3 [Appendix](#)*.
- Arrangements for a record of the workshop to be placed into participants' files after workshop. Be certain to find out who is responsible for doing this.
- If something goes wrong, who to contact and how?

It cannot be stressed too strongly that agreed-upon details are to be put into writing and sent to the contact person in the institution as soon as they are finalized, at least one month before the first workshop starts. (A sample letter is included in Chapter 3 [Appendix](#)). Things often have a way of being forgotten or misunderstood, or slipping through the cracks in the prison setting. Take no chances. Then phone the contact person two weeks in advance of the workshop to make sure that he or she has received the document and everything is in order. This procedure should be followed for each workshop, although the first one is particularly crucial.

## Who Should Be Invited to the First Workshop?

It must always be clear that after the program is launched, inmates will be taken strictly in the order in which they sign up. However, the first workshop provides a unique set of circumstances. Stress the need for diversity in the first group: racial, gang, age, and yard leaders. If the request has come from an inmate who has then found inmate participants for the first session, this list should make up the first group, but always try to encourage diversity. Otherwise, it is good to invite the Inmate Advisory Council or a similar organization made up of representatives from different tiers, dormitories or cellblocks, and perhaps have them invite one friend each. The advantage of this is that word of mouth will get around the entire institution so that a strong base of volunteers is generated for future workshops.

*(See Chapter 3 [Appendix](#) - AVP Prison Workshop Flyer, Prison Housing Unit poster for promoting workshop inside prison).*

Another possibility is to have the first workshop be largely made up of representatives of different inmate self-help groups and other inmate organizations. These ideas should be discussed with the Volunteer Activities Coordinator and any inmates who are already involved, or whoever is the main contact person for AVP in the prison.

## Before Every Workshop

Once the details are finalized with the prison, the arrangements need to be made with a confirming letter sent to your inside contact several weeks in advance. The letter should be brought or mailed to those prison officials setting up the workshop as well as to outside facilitators and participants. Include the following information:

- Names of team members and any participants from outside who need to be cleared for entry into the prison.
- Workshop materials to be cleared for entry into the prison. Request that the inside contact person give this list to the prison entry check-in point, but carry it with you just in case it doesn't get there.
- Team-building and session times.
- Any agreements made with the prison when the program was set up, such as outcounts for inside facilitators and participants, and how meals are to be served in the workshop.
- Arrangements for the outside facilitators to enter the prison, including who will meet them where and when.
- Name, position and number of the person to contact if something goes wrong.

**In addition:**

- Coordinate security requests for outsiders coming into prison for workshops. This often means gathering social security numbers, dates of birth and other information required by the prison for their routine security check.
- Be sure all outside participants and team members are aware of the volunteer guidelines and regulations for the institution. Having a personal conversation with first-timers in a prison is essential. It increases their comfort and your assurance that they understand what ID to bring, what not to wear, what they may bring and appropriate behavior. This will reduce delays and problems.
- Arrange for outside facilitators overnight lodging, and plan pick-ups from public transportation or coordinate carpooling. Provide needed directions.
- Make sure an AVP kit is available and stocked to take into the prison.  
*See Chapter 3 [Appendix](#) - Kit Supplies*
- Call the institution two or three days prior to the workshop to make certain everything is in order.

**What to expect from the prison**

- That passes will be issued and distributed (written permission to leave job, school or housing unit to go to the workshop) to the prisoners attending the workshop in enough time to allow participants to make work or visit arrangements.
- That provision has been made for inside facilitators to attend pre and post workshop team meetings.
- That a list of participants and their DOC number will be given to the AVP team.
- That the administration or inside contact will generate, approve, and deliver entry memos.
- That meal arrangements are made.
- That entries are made in graduates' files indicating completion of the workshop.
- That all the outcounts will be handled.

*For definitions of prison vocabulary, see Chapter 4 [Appendix](#): AVPNY Volunteer Handbook.*

**Through the Eyes of Long-time AVP Prison Volunteers:*****Understanding the Prison Experience***

Before a community volunteer first goes into a prison to facilitate, a number of considerations need to be explored. This list is a good reminder and a way to explain the experience to newcomers. In these excerpts from the AVP/NY Volunteer Handbook, you will find wisdom and practicality from our original AVP organization.

1. Prison is, to outsiders, a foreign country. As in any foreign country, it is wise to be quiet, observe, listen, learn the language and identify the values of the prison culture before advancing too many strong opinions or taking any drastic action.



2. Don't be afraid to define yourself clearly. You are not required to be all things to all people at all times, or to live up (or down) to any stereotype which prisoners may have about you as an outsider. You are entitled, moreover, to define for yourself and for others what you choose to be or not be, do or not to do. This will take some time, but you should be aware of the need to do it from the beginning of your prison volunteering. Even after you have clearly defined yourself, expect to be tested—again and again. Eventually, however, if you are firm in sticking to your definition of yourself, others will adjust to it.
3. Expect to meet many tremendous and valuable people in prison. Expect also to meet some champion manipulators. Do not be surprised if these sometimes turn out to be one and the same person. Manipulation is a form of survival for the powerless.
4. Especially at first, people may find it helpful, as soon as possible after volunteering in a prison, to share with a trusted friend the feelings generated by the prison experience. It is a rare person who does not experience anger, fear, pain, outrage, wonder, and other strong emotions upon contact with the prison environment. These feelings, once shared, can lead to much that is constructive and rewarding. Unshared, they can lead to emotional burnout and ill-considered actions. In a prison, people can expect to feel an unfamiliar, very heady, and very
5. addictive "super star" feeling, especially at first. It may arise from sexuality in a deprived environment or from the unfamiliar power that comes from knowledge of another world. As an AVP facilitator, you may have been part of a team that helped someone discover a new and wonderful sense of community. In any case, do not let it go to your head. It is possible that after volunteering in a prison, you will feel
6. alienated from other people who have not shared and do not understand this experience, and from the society that produced and maintains the prisons. Share the humanness of the people you have met in prison without expecting that others will understand what you do. Expect to find in prisons all the corruption and evils of society as well as
7. all the goodness of human nature—both magnified larger than life.

Therefore, resist the temptation to:

- a) Romanticize the prisoner. If his or her being incarcerated does not necessarily make him or her a monster, neither does it necessarily make him or her a saint. To assume otherwise is always inaccurate, usually patronizing-sometimes dangerous.
- b) See Correction Officers and other prison staff as obstacles to our program. Some may be supportive of AVP; others may not. All are responsible for security and have specific procedures they are required to follow. Many are good people trying to do a hard and thankless job well.

- Go cautiously at first; awareness comes with experience. The initial
8. prison experience might be frightening in and of itself. If you have stuck with it long enough for this to wear off and you find yourself afraid of a given person, chances are that he or she may be dangerous to you. If you feel resentful of demands being made on you, you may well be being hustled. Trust these feelings and seek support from experienced volunteers in dealing with the situation. Learn to trust your intuition and heed it. If after an initial exposure you find yourself fearful of the prison environment, you should not continue to go into prisons. This work is not for everyone.

9. Do not ask about what crime a person has been convicted of. This information is not relevant and AVP is about reaching for the good in each person.
10. Do not under ANY circumstances bring ANY contraband into the prison, no matter how innocent the item may seem and even if you don't agree with the rule. The introduction of ANY prohibited article by a volunteer is a misdemeanor at least, and if caught the volunteer may be subject both to criminal prosecution, and to the closing down of the AVP program in that prison.
11. As for rules in general, expect to find some that seem unnecessarily silly, unjust, or oppressive but never try to disobey them or discuss them with prisoners. Remember also that the rules are subject to change at any moment. Questioning of rules should be done through the AVP outside coordinator and the regional AVP group.
12. Prisons are destructive environments. It is essential, therefore, that you find a community that will offer you a safe place to vent your real feelings and to discuss your real problems, without fear of judgment or condemnation. At the same time, that community must love you enough to reach out to bring you back when you stray onto dangerous or unproductive paths. AVP groups and Friends (Quaker) Meetings can be such communities. There are people in both who understand from experience what it is to be human, the very definition of which means that one is imperfect and vulnerable in one's feelings.
13. Expect to be physically attracted some time in your prison work. Almost nobody escapes this experience, regardless of age, marital status, or sexual orientation. Even those having foresworn all such relationships and feelings may feel a physical attraction. If this happens to you, examine yourself to see whether the feeling contains one or more of the following elements:
  - a) The sexual deprivation of prison life creates an electrical charge in the very air when volunteers enter a prison—a charge that no person can fail to feel.
  - b) Incarceration changes the balance of power between women and men. One of the few milieus in our society where a woman is more powerful than a man is in the prison situation, where the woman is free and the man is a prisoner. As men have long known, the possession of power can be a sexual turn-on. Women have had so little experience of this phenomenon, that they may not recognize the sexual overtones of power and may mistake it for genuine attraction.
  - c) Incarceration makes a normal everyday relationship inaccessible, allowing both parties to fantasize without committing to live with the results of a relationship in the real world. The dark side of this is that you may be exploiting another person, without being aware you are doing so by projecting your fantasies and your needs on him or her, fantasies that in the real world you cannot or will not follow through.
14. If you are seized by any strong emotion with regard to another person, whatever it turns out to be, give yourself time and room to find out what it actually is before you act on it. Use the AVP "Queries on Relationships" below to help you sort out your feelings. If you make the decision that the relationship is worth having, you **MUST** remove yourself **IMMEDIATELY** as a volunteer. Do this **BEFORE** you consider communicating with the person by telephone, by mail or with a visit.



15. In the meantime, remember that a sexually-deprived environment breeds violent jealousy and other strong emotions, and a volunteer who chooses a prisoner for a lover could bring down the enmity of both prisoners and officers, a situation that could become dangerous for the person she or he has "chosen."
16. Remember also that many people have to spend long years in this deprived environment, and that it is important for them to adjust to the realities of doing time.
17. Do not be surprised if you become overly preoccupied with an individual prisoner. Romantic attraction is only one of the roots of such preoccupation. Others are compassion, admiration for a strong personality or valuable talent, or a sense of perceived injustice. Try to keep a balance and not invest all of your valuable energy in one person where there is so much need in others also.
18. Under no circumstances should you give out your telephone number or personal information that might identify where you live.
19. Prisons have proven that people learn little from punishment but more from example. What you do in prison, therefore, is more important than what you say there. A broken promise to an incarcerated person is even more painful than one made in normal life, and it is an act of cruelty. Even worse, a broken promise can further inhibit the other person's ability to trust; and since trust is essential for integration into a community, a broken promise may further alienate the person from society. Therefore, do not make unrealistic promises about giving your weekends for workshops or support programs.
20. AVP is not about "saving" others. It is about creating opportunities to practice nonviolence ourselves and share the gift of Transforming Power that was shared with us.
21. Always remember that we stand for AVP values and processes based on consensus, nonviolence, truth and the availability of Transforming Power to every person. These values are not likely to be found in prison guidelines for volunteers. Nevertheless, they are the most valuable things we have to offer to the prison and the world, and we should never allow them to be compromised, no matter how strong the pressure is to do so.
22. Remember that as an AVP volunteer, you are a member of an organization that has programs in prisons all over the state, the country and the world. How AVP volunteers conduct themselves in one prison is communicated by prisoners and administrators to other prisons. The reputation you establish in the prison in which you volunteer affects the reputation of AVP as a whole and the willingness of administrators in other prisons to support AVP programs in the prisons for which they are responsible.
23. If we are to live nonviolently to the fullest extent we are able, we must practice nonviolent behavior consistently. We encourage and support others in living nonviolently as we get better at actually being nonviolent ourselves. AVP encourages all facilitators to take part in regular support groups and all-facilitator gatherings or workshops so that we may take on the role of participant and practice with our peers.

See Chapter 4 [\*\*Appendix\*\*](#) for additional Guidelines for Volunteers in the AVP/NY Volunteer Handbook.

## Queries on Relationships

Although we like to believe that everyone in AVP is equal, everyone is not equal in one very important respect: power. AVP facilitators who enter prison voluntarily have the power to walk out the door; inside facilitators and participants do not. This imbalance of power can have subtle effects, and it is important for both outside facilitators and inside facilitators to understand them.

Most workshops are powerful emotional experiences, and we rightly enjoy the feelings of love and joy that come out of having built a community based on trust and friendship. Those of us who continue to work together inside a prison to coordinate the AVP program there have the blessing of closer relationships, as we work together to nurture and expand our community.

AVP organizations and programs work to break down barriers of rank and hierarchy; and facilitators going into prison may want to reject the authority and power that is conferred on them by the freedom to walk away while others in their AVP community cannot. Efforts to build relationships that are blind to the inequality of power between an incarcerated person and an outsider may seduce them into blurring the boundaries established by the contract under which AVP is allowed in prisons.

When an outside facilitator or an inside facilitator finds himself or herself developing a special relationship with one person — having feelings that are stronger for that person than for others in their AVP community — it is time to question that relationship, and perhaps to seek help in sorting those feelings out.

AVP facilitators rarely enter into a special relationship with a conscious decision to exploit or harm the person; however, developing such a relationship can result in subtle or blatant harm, both to the AVP program and to the incarcerated person.

### Some questions/queries:

- Would I be comfortable having my fellow facilitators know about the special relationship I have with this one particular person?
- What response would I make to any misgivings that they expressed?
- What is the potential impact on the AVP program in this prison?
- What is the potential impact on the incarcerated person if the corrections officers were to learn of our relationship?
- As an outside facilitator, does my feeling that my situation is "special" make it seem all right for me to violate the agreements I have made with the Department of Correctional Services as a member of the AVP organization?
- Am I ready to make a choice between continuing this special relationship and facilitating AVP in the prisons?
- Are there emotional or other situations in my life right now that might impair my judgment about these issues?

See the AVP/NY Volunteer Handbook in the Chapter 4 [Appendix](#) for *When Things Go Wrong, Dealing with Inappropriate Behavior*.

## After the Workshop

- Immediately following the workshop, de-brief with the team  
*See Appendix - Post-workshop Team Evaluation.*
- Be sure the prison contact has the final list of graduates
- Thank and make a brief report to your prison contact. Be sure to report and explain any mistakes in security your team may have made.
- The lead facilitator fills out and turns in the Overall Evaluation Form to appropriate persons in local group.
- Experienced facilitators or the outside prison coordinator calls first-time outside facilitators to debrief their experience in the prison.

You are now ready to develop your local council of facilitators.

# **Chapter 4 -**

## **Keeping Your Local Group Vital**

**Suggestions That May Help You over the Long Haul as You Grow.**

- **Grounding in AVP**
- **Nuts and Bolts**
- **Maintaining a Community Council**
- **Financial Organization**
- **Setting up a Healthy Financial System**
- **Acquiring Non-profit Status**
- **Fundraising**
- **Dealing with Organizational Problems**
- **Supporting an AVP Inside Facilitators Council**



## Grounding in AVP

*A workshop is one weekend. The local group is real life.*

Local groups are the basic foundation of AVP nationally and internationally. Your local group's health is maintained primarily by your facilitators' commitment to working out the inevitable problems. Though experienced facilitators around the country are happy to answer your questions, the real problem-solving decisions come from your fellow local facilitators. Ideas for solutions to group stress can be found in the Basic, Advanced and Training for Facilitators Manuals and within you - not unlike life.

Suggestions that may help over the long haul as you grow:

- Have regular meetings of the AVP local group on whatever schedule works for your group. Face-to-face is preferable, but conference calls can fill gaps.
- Check *FreeConferenceCall.com*. Try an annual party.
- If possible keep doing community workshops to build up and strengthen the base of outside facilitators and community support.

## Nuts and Bolts

- Keep good financial records. Either designate a revolving Treasurer position or have your bookkeeping records looked at by more than one set of eyes.
- Take brief minutes of your meetings with decisions listed and distribute to all group members.
- Raise funds. Offer community workshops. Someone in your group may feel led to do wider fundraising; encourage them.
- Develop a lead facilitator process, including mentoring and lead facilitator committee meetings and possibly develop Advanced Facilitation Skills workshops. A body of work already is being done at a number of Local Councils; check the AVP/USA list serve on the web to get input.

See Chapter 4 [Appendix](#) - AVP/ CA Lead Trainers Workshop.

- Keeping true to the AVP/USA Policy Statement in your workshops and your group meetings helps to maintain a higher standard of ethical AVP behavior.

## our Best Resource Is AVP/USA, Inc.

- Subscribe to *The Transformer*. (This quarterly publication is free to all new facilitators for the first year after they graduate from the T4F.) You may subscribe or renew your subscription at: <http://avpusa.org/transformer>. Check <http://thetransformer.us> for an archive of back issues.
- Send representatives to National Conferences.
- Seed grants are available for new or struggling organizations that might want to build a supply box for a new institution, bring in facilitators and get help covering airfare, get non-profit status 501(c)(3), or have facilitator training sessions.  
See Chapter 4 [Appendix](#) : Fundraising.
- Participate on the AVP/USA list serve, AVP-L. (Subscribe from [www.avpusa.org](http://www.avpusa.org).)
- Be sure to ask for any kind of help you need. Start with the CLARG (*Committee of Local and Regional Groups*, [CLARG@avpusa.org](mailto:CLARG@avpusa.org) .) A great deal of experience and wisdom is in the larger circle of AVP; take advantage of this. No doubt someone has dealt with your issues before and is willing to share their experience or wisdom. Use the website for articles, to talk with your regional representative (also found on the website). Use the AVP/USA listserve - [avp-l@googlegroups.com](mailto:avp-l@googlegroups.com) - and expect responses that are helpful.
- The website, with updated information, is probably the best resource (<http://avpusa.org>); but you can access other contact information by calling the national AVP/USA, Inc. office at 888-278-7820, toll-free. You can also write to: AVP/USA, 1050 Selby Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104 or e-mail [avp@avpusa.org](mailto:avp@avpusa.org).
- Keep your local information up-to-date on the website. Local councils, even of two people, are also responsible for filling out workshop data on the website. This consists of logging in as "member" using the password "texashug" and filling in the information (about three minutes per workshop) in the bar marked "AVP/USA, workshop data and activity reports." Storing your workshop statistics here makes writing your annual report to CLARG much easier.

## Maintaining a Community Council

(aka Local Group, Local Chapter, Area Council)

A local council may consist of yourself and your best friend, or you might be large enough to operate from an office with paid staff and coordinate programs in several prisons. In this chapter, we will assume you've successfully begun your AVP program and wish to maintain and possibly grow it in a healthy supportive way.

## Catalyst Factor

The role of "leadership" in AVP is to bring people together to see where they want to go and who is prepared to make it happen. The concept of a "person in charge" is not part of the AVP vocabulary. The idea of a "coordinator" or "organizer" is more likely to fit than the role of "leader." A group takes ownership when they are led (coordinated) from behind—learning how to do it themselves. Those "in charge" may fit best into AVP if they think of themselves as volunteer coordinators catalyzing others into discovering their best use.

To understand more about the grass-roots approach of AVP—beyond AVP materials—read *The Spider and the Starfish* by Brafman and Beckstrom. A group will grow only as quickly as the individual members are willing to take on projects. When you find people balking at taking on responsibilities for maintaining the group, take time to step back as a group and listen to one another. Listen for individual needs and challenges as they relate to the group's needs and challenges, remembering the AVP Guides and Agreements from the Basic Manual as you work through these.

*(For familiar organizational structures in AVP, see Chapter 4 [Appendix](#) : Examples of Local Groups.)*

### **When things get tough, step back and inside.**

One local group found itself increasingly faced with unresolved disagreements and enmity among one another. To try to resolve their unending conflict, they decided to stop facilitating workshops for a year during which they worked on themselves through a retreat, an AVP Advanced Workshop just for them and regular social meetings. They wanted to create an opportunity to get to know one another and redevelop trust and caring among the group. That group still functions today, expanding and supporting workshops throughout the region.

## Keeping Grounded

- Deal with conflicts openly, using AVP guidelines. Talking behind one another's backs and allowing issues to be unresolved create unnecessary problems for the group.
- Remain true to the AVP guidelines and the ideal of consensus decision-making.
- Support those who serve in making policy and decisions, yet allow for reversal of decisions later if called for.
- Rotate the coordinators if at all possible to develop others' experience and reduce burnout. Vary the facilitators on your teams so people work frequently with different people. The process of working with different teams is invigorating, sometimes challenging - a chance to develop one's AVP skills and stimulate new ways of approaching the same basic formats..
- Include your new facilitators in a workshop as early as possible after their TforF. If you have a schedule of up-coming events, each person in the TforF can sign up and know when they will have the opportunity to facilitate..
- Consider hosting the annual national gathering or a regional meeting. This can be very powerful in pulling your local group together, increasing consciousness of the larger picture - not only in the United States but also internationally - and stimulating creativity and interest in doing more local and/or prison work.



## **Don't Forget the Inside Facilitators[**

A positive teaching and motivating dynamic flows back and forth with those who do community workshops AND prison workshops. Doing prison workshops provides an excellent opportunity for facilitators to practice and sharpen their group process skills. It also provides them with insight and credibility when working with teenagers in the community or in schools.

The inside facilitators benefit by receiving fresh ideas from the outside. They, in turn, give insight based upon living every day with constant conflict that can quickly turn to violence. The inmates, many of whom bring great wisdom to AVP, then have the satisfaction of helping those on

## **Financial Organization**

Once you have created your own local group, creating a financial system becomes an important contributor to stability and trust among your facilitators. Knowing where the group is financially is crucial to the health and growth of the group. Most people will not ask about the financial health of the group. However, if you do not present financial reports and prepare budgets, you are putting those who do feel fiscally responsible in the uncomfortable position of needing to question what is going on with the group's money. Sometimes the sponsoring organization — a Quaker meeting or local peace group— will take you under its wing using their treasurer and bank account, but you will still need to create a separate budget and establish a method of handling reimbursements.

## **Setting up a Healthy Financial System**

### **Acquire Tax-exempt Status**

In order for a group to open a checking account and receive donations that will be exempt from taxes as well as providing a tax deduction to the donor, the group needs to apply for tax-exempt status, 501(c)(3). This can be done in a couple of ways: either find a group sponsor who will take you under their tax status or apply to AVP/USA to be recognized under their status. For details on how to accomplish this, See Chapter 4 [Appendix](#): Becoming Tax Exempt under AVP/USA

### **Components of a Financial System**

- Acquire tax-exempt status through AVP/USA or a local organization.
- Have your group agree to open a checking account and decide who will be the 2 eligible signers.
- Create a budget annually, approved by the group.
- Decide on who will be the treasurer and what those duties might involve.
- As a simple internal audit, institute review of the bank reconciliation by another member of the group who understands bank reconciliation.
- Have a financial report presented at each meeting.
- Design a system for reimbursements.
- Turn in required year-end reports to maintain your tax-exempt status

## Checking Account and Treasurers

Select one or (preferably) two people to serve as co-treasurers as your first order of business after you have your tax-exempt status. Some groups function under the care of a local organization such as a Quaker Meeting or a peace group. In that case, the Treasurer position becomes less bookkeeping and more oversight. Unless you have a large group of facilitators, this task is not very time-consuming and could be done by someone who may not be a bookkeeper-type but who is organized and computer literate. Understanding Excel or Quicken would be an asset. After a formal agreement by the group, the person can set up a bank account. The group may decide to have several signatures on the account but only require one signature, assuring that the Treasurer doesn't sign his/her own reimbursement checks.

## Budgeting

Create a budget annually for approval by the local group. Although prison facilitators are not paid for conducting workshops, they will have expenses that your group should be able to meet. Facilitators may request reimbursement for travel, overnight lodging and/or elder and child care expenses. As your program expands, so will your need for funds. Other than the workshop expenses listed above, postage, office supplies, phone access and duplicating will need to be paid for.

Creating a budget can be done merely by hand, but it is easiest in a computer program (e.g., Excel or Quicken) that does the math automatically for you as you change line item amounts. Honoring the varying needs of your facilitators means knowing what these needs are when creating a budget. For example, while many facilitators are comfortable with overnight home hospitality (free), some have life experiences which make them very uncomfortable in others' homes, and which make budgeting for lodging a necessity.

### **Line Items to Consider In a Staff-less AVP Local Group's Budget:**

#### **Income:**

- Workshop donations
- Donations from individuals or groups
- Fundraising events
- Grants

#### **Expenses**

- Transportation for facilitation team
- Food
- Workshop site rental/donation
- Lodging for facilitation team
- Elder/child care expenses
- "Lost wages" (See Chapter 4 [Appendix: Expense reimbursement sample](#))
- Postage
- Office supplies
- Workshop kit supplies
- Phone calls
- Duplicating handouts and flyer

## Reimbursement

Set up a system whereby members can request reimbursement and be reimbursed. Things can get sticky here, so create a clearly written reimbursement policy and a reimbursement request form, which is available to and understood by all facilitators. Then the council needs to back up the Treasurer when adhering to these policies.

Usual requirements for reimbursements are:

- A receipt or copy of receipt (if not available, then a handwritten and signed note indicating the person receiving money and for what item or service.)
- The name of person requesting reimbursement.
- What the reimbursement is for.
- The date of expenditure.
- The signature of the person requesting reimbursement.

*See Chapter 4 [Appendix](#) for sample reimbursement forms and policy.*

Whenever you have someone facilitate, be sure they have these forms and this information. Some councils have them easily accessible on the local website or list serves or they are handed out at the workshop graduation.

### **Making it Possible for Everyone to Facilitate**

Recently we had the privilege of having the family of a recent parolee facilitator in a Basic Workshop. His wife, his blind stepson and bipolar fiancé, both receiving supplementary income, needed bus fare and scholarships to take the workshop. Ample food provided by the local group during the workshop was especially appreciated by this family. These four added immensely to the depth of the workshop—even to the point that a long-time facilitator who preferred prison workshops said it was one of the most meaningful workshops he had ever facilitated! This kind of financial flexibility is crucial to the growth of community workshops.

Another excellent parolee facilitator who adds diversity to the team, needed to take off from work on Friday to be on the team and was paid a stipend, called "lost wages," so that volunteering for the weekend was not a financial burden to his new family of four. He did not ask for this; however, he was deeply grateful when it was mentioned and offered.

So, we need not assume just because someone is a volunteer that they can afford to be one. Budgeting the costs for facilitators to participate in a workshop grows out of an important awareness that such compensation needs to be offered whenever it is possible. Expenses for food, housing and transportation seem like basic polite things to offer to someone traveling from a distance; lost wages need to be considered as well. Often our best parolee facilitators work on weekends and cannot afford to lose their income to be on a team.

Pay attention to these concerns, because your group needs to make decisions about them collectively in order to make a budget.

## Financial Reports

Your group should expect to receive regular- at least quarterly- financial reports from your treasurer, and it has the right to require a financial report every time it meets. This is good training for fiscal responsibility as a group, but awareness also helps to keep the costs down and the fund-raising up.

Minimally, the reports should include:

- Line items with amounts budgeted for each.
- Year-to-date line-item income and expenditures.
- Year-to-date totals on income and expenses. Helpful to include in a financial report but not necessary for small groups.
- How much was received or expended for each line item since the last report.
- Total expenses and income for the most recent period.
- Percentage that has been expended and received to date.
- An explanation for those items over budget (e.g., paid full year's Transformer newsletter subscriptions.)

If this seems too daunting, consider contacting a local bookkeeper and pricing the cost for services. The small amount of work involved and an understanding of the great service you offer may motivate a donation of services to your group.

## Fundraising

To assure a financially healthy group, the income side needs to be planned. Build the expense side of your budget to get a better idea of how much money you need to raise. A core concept of AVP is that the usual means of raising money (from workshop fee/donations sometimes augmented by individuals and groups such as churches/meetings), are likely to sustain your local prison workshop activities. (*See Workshop Donations in Chapter 1, First steps to forming a local group - 5. Consider methods of funding.*) However, you may need to explore additional methods of raising funds if your prison is located quite a distance from your outside volunteers or if your group decides to take on a larger project.

## In-kind Donations

When someone gives you a product or service, this in-kind donation is often as valuable as cash.

Traditional examples are overnight hospitality in people's homes and the meals the hosts may provide for their guests.

Hotel room nights may be available at a discounted rate or even free during slower seasons. A business hotel in a city may have little business on a Friday and Saturday, and a tourist area hotel is likely to be glad to make rooms available at a discounted or donated rate off-season. Talk personally to the owner or manager; desk staff will generally not be able to make that decision but can tell you a little about their hotel's policy. Sometimes a corporate group won't allow a discount to you, but since you are going into a prison as a volunteer, you can ask for the government rate.

Car pooling with other facilitators helps reduce transportation costs. Another economical and, certainly more environmentally friendly, approach to getting there is by using public transportation (bus &/or train).

When holding workshops, finding a site that is donated to you helps keep costs down. Food costs also can be kept to a minimum by asking for sandwiches from a local restaurant or cookies and beverages from a supportive group or even your friends.

Think of how you might give someone a chance to support an incredible program. Try very hard not to have the program rely only on facilitators paying their expenses. People won't always tell you that they cannot afford to be a facilitator (if they have to foot all the expenses); believe they are out there and be sensitive to this issue.

Find ways to document in-kind donations. Often, in addition to in-kind donations listed below, for example, facilitators donate their travel expenses. Documenting these donations and the hours volunteers donate may be useful if at some point you seek grants. If asking for cash donations from groups, always be able to mention the in-kind donations and volunteer hours that already have been given.

Having volunteers ask for reimbursement for their expenses and then asking them to donate that money (or more) back for a tax deduction works also. Be sure they check with their tax person on the best way to handle this. They might claim documented volunteer expenses on their income tax without having to donate back.

## M

### **Motel Lodging -Creating a Relationship**

In a small remote town with two prison AVP programs, motels are only busy one or two months a year, so finding safe, comfortable lodging at a reasonable rate was not difficult most of the time. The first year after we spoke to the Rotary Club, a member donated free rooms at his motel. Though the warden wrote a very nice thank-you note and AVP sent him a holiday wreath with a framed certificate of appreciation, the motel owner had to stop doing this when the city didn't believe he was giving away so many rooms and required that he pay city bed tax on the rooms. In addition, his corporate group forbade him from continuing the donation. Complicating things, one of the facilitator teams left a mess in the room, and some were not leaving tips.

Subsequently, after the group looked at quite a few establishments, one which had a reputation of being generous to local projects was recommended. Fortunately, at the nicest one, the manager offered a \$50 rate (half price) during all but one month a year. For the manager, AVP represented a donation and resulted in six filled room nights a month or 72 a year. They serve a large continental breakfast and facilitators now tip regularly. AVP has been welcomed there for 3 years and presents inn-keeper with a certificate of appreciation annually.

## **Saying Thank You**

In ALL cases, be sure that generous appreciation is given to those who donate in-kind services.

When spending the night at someone's home, plan to bring a hostess gift of a book, candy, fruit from your tree, flowers or whatever fits you and the person. A deeply discounted guest room at a hotel or donated hotel room s need to be acknowledged. The best way in a hotel/motel is to generously tip the housekeeper. This helps the hotelier keep staff and lets all know you appreciate their generosity. When AVP receives free space for a workshop, some groups send a small check to help cover utilities used and include a thank-you note.

## Free Food

One Quaker Worship Group handles logistics for workshops; they purchase and deliver food and clean up afterwards. One family doesn't accept reimbursement as their contribution.

Another smaller, more elderly Meeting has individuals who are supportive of AVP; they volunteer to help purchase food or prepare a Friday night snack buffet or dessert. Though volunteers are not able to provide everything, by making a list of what is needed, the workshop coordinators were able to invite participation through the kitchens of concerned Friends.

## Individual Donations:

Sometimes the easiest donations are those raised from people you know or who have inquired about AVP. Think about it...wouldn't you rather donate to a program and to people that you know are spending your hard-earned money well?

Write a letter or ask an inmate to write something that you can send to "friends of AVP." The letter should tell someone's story of the AVP experience, and possibly include statistics on how many people in prison and the community you have impacted. Give them an idea where the money goes and how much these things cost.

These letters will have the best impact is when your facilitators hand-write or e-mail them personally.

When you send out your first request for funds, ask facilitators and participants for names of people to send the letter or e-mail to; save those names for next year.

See Chapter 4 [Appendix](#): *Sample Appeals for Money and The Messaging Trap*.

Make it easy to donate by enclosing a self-addressed envelope or a link to your website to pay by PayPal.

Of course, sending a prompt thank you and putting the donor on your newsletter list is appropriate.

### Transitions Benefit AVP

When two facilitators were getting married for the second time around, they asked for guests to donate to AVP/California in lieu of gifts. Over \$500 was received. The bride and groom were e-mailed every time a gift was received so they could also thank their friends.

A 92-year-old facilitator who had been involved with AVP for two years was so enthusiastic about her experiences in prison that her children listed donations to AVP in lieu of flowers when she died.

## Company Donations

All donations from companies do not need to be in-kind; many companies have employee funds for financial donations to local non-profits or give corporate donations. To tap these, ask around and keep your eyes and ears open for people who might know of or be a part of these companies. Encourage your facilitators and other council members to be on the trail of generous companies. The smaller local companies sometimes are the most likely to give your group money. It's "the somebody who knows somebody else" that ferrets out these opportunities.

## **Local Business Contributes**

A very popular and growing small company gives money to local organizations. A facilitator who regularly patronizes this store was talking about AVP with an employee who suggested writing a letter requesting funds. The facilitator followed up on this and turned in the form and received \$500.

## **Grants**

Grants seem like the gravy train for fundraising; however, be forewarned that most funding agencies are not particularly interested in adult prisoner work. Writing grants takes time that most of us don't have - unless you have a professional grant writer in your group. The best option is to take the same approach to grants as to company donations - somebody who knows someone on the board or staff. Local foundations that may give more modest amounts are also more accessible.

*See Chapter 4 [Appendix](#): Generic Grant Application.*

When looking at applying to any foundation, save yourself many hours of time by reading their requirements for grants. Write your questions, then call and talk to staff about your possibilities given your plans for the grant.

Each grantor has different requirements for submission; read them carefully, read between the lines and write directly to their requests. Some are looking for a very professional paid staff, some for youth only, etc. You save wasted effort if you eliminate submitting to grantors who won't even consider your application.

Be sure that if you are applying for a grant to a group outside your geographic area that you contact other AVP groups in that area to make sure that they are not applying for the same grant.

The money is there. Don't let finding it and requesting it many times daunt you. Keep open to possibilities.

## Four Grant Processes

AVP/USA ...

..offers small grants specifically for getting groups started or offering special training. The short application was filled out for a starting program and sent off. Within a month, the money requested was in the mail. As the state expanded to different areas, another application was made and funded. Reports and receipts are required later. This is clearly the easiest grant of all.

See Chapter 4 [Appendix](#):

*Fundraising, AVP/USA Seed Grant/Locals funding applications.*

A local, progressive, grass-roots-focused foundation ...

... on which board one of the AVP facilitator's partner serves, was looking for some kind of prison involvement, so AVP met with the director to discuss the possibilities. Before a grant could be submitted, the director heard from a donor particularly interested in prison work. The donor wanted (in 24 hours) a two-page summary of our work and how we would use the money. The \$7000 grant we received helped local people take AVP workshops and facilitate in locations around the state.

A small family foundation ...

...started by a former prison chaplain came to the attention of the state AVP through a workshop participant. A letter was written explaining AVP and what it does, and a financial statement was provided. A check for \$5000 arrived 2 months later. The same person suggested that in the next submission we focus on the systemic changes AVP was making in the prisons. That was done the next year, and \$10,000 arrived.

The Department of Corrections ...

...put out a request for proposals to groups working with prisoners. AVP/California wrote a 30-page grant for community outreach coordinators who would recruit people to take community workshops in preparation for facilitating in prisons. No money was requested for prison workshops. Maximum amount \$100,000. All successful applicants were large, fully paid staff organizations who were serving only parolees. AVP did not fit.

## Fund-raising Events

Sometimes it seems that holding an event is an easier way to raise money than asking people for it. This is not always true because the time to organize a successful event takes time away from facilitating. Having another group hold the event for you is the best possible way, unless you have a lot of facilitators with free time who love to throw parties.



## Dealing With Organizational Problems

### Challenges Working with Other Human Beings

"Organizational problems" is a nice way of saying you are being challenged by individual personalities in your local group. At some time every group has people who drive people away, question the way things are being done, want to take charge, or do not understand the value of consensus and of the group as a whole. Dealing with people we disagree with is what we are all about as an organization; it is heartbreaking when faced with a situation where an individual is representing AVP in a way that is damaging to AVP and the participants.

See Chapter 4 [\*\*Appendix\*\*](#): AVPNY Volunteer Manual Part 3-

*When Things Go Wrong, Dealing with Inappropriate Behavior.*

AVP has built into the workshops many tools for handling such conflicts, so turn to your group and your manuals for guidance.

These issues are normal for a local group and give us skills to practice AVP. They are so common that the AVP International Gathering in 2008 spent considerable time looking at ways to handle them.

### **Participants from around the world identified these problems and suggested approaches to handling them:**

#### **Problem: Racial, Tribal, Gender Discrimination**

Suggested approaches:

- Explore value differences.
- Team building by sharing.
- Anti-bias work.
- Find the generalizations and prove them wrong.
- Identify the problem and ask for a community based on respect.
- Do the "Masks" exercise and debrief.
- Discuss how unequal power weakens the group.
- Practice assertiveness.

#### **Problem: Power Structure Within the Group Based on Experience**

Suggested approaches:

- Have a whole team meeting to discuss the philosophy of AVP and ways to model that for the larger community.
- Have your group agree to the importance of having all facilitators develop strong skills.
- Form a plan for the continued growth and development of all facilitators.

#### **Problem: Behavior Inappropriate for the Place or Situation**

Suggested approaches:

- Speak to the person one on one.
- The behavior could be named generally in the wrap-up session.
- The local group may need to address the behavior of the individual.
- The local group may need to say that until the problem is addressed, that the facilitator cannot do any more workshops.
- If at all possible, never shut out the possibility that the person can return to facilitation, but you may have to require that certain behaviors change.

## **Problem: Facilitator Who Has Poor Skills or Is Not Dependable**

### **Suggested solutions**

- Talk one-on-one with the person.
- Be honest but respectful.
- Be clear about the problem.
- Be patient and persistent.
- Give them a mentor.

Sometimes sorting through one's own feelings separately can help the process. At the same time, however, sharing what you are experiencing in relation to this other person's actions might shed light on the situation for others in the group. Tact, transparency and honesty in a group help in determining just what the issues truly are.

### **One Local Group's Struggle**

Nearly two years ago, we had a conflict with one of our outside facilitators. She had been very active for several years, with increasing tension between us (I was more aware of the problem than she). She insisted in bringing in two suitcases of stuff for each workshop; most items which were duplicates of the workshop materials and supplies I was bringing in. She also insisted in having her way when a difference of opinion arose on what exercises we should use in a workshop. She obviously wanted to be the person in charge while at the same time refusing to take on learning and leading the more difficult exercises. She was very popular with the inmates because she would spend lots of time talking with them and come into the prison for several other programs.

When she stopped returning my phone calls, it came to a head. I called together all the other outside facilitators to talk about it — was I the only one with the problem? It turned out the others agreed with me that she wasn't working out; and after many hours of discussion and getting advice from others, we asked her to meet with three of us. It took two hours, but we clarified a lot of things. We asked her to modify her behavior in specific ways. After it was over, we asked everyone to write down what was said at that meeting (we all took notes); all but one person did this. This was the first action we asked her to take, but she didn't do it.

At that point, we stopped asking her to be on workshop teams and dropped her from the program. She was very upset with us (particularly me) and has remained so. It was very upsetting for all of us. But we have gone on without her and no longer have tension in the workshops.

## **Supporting an AVP Inside Facilitators Group**

***Supporting an AVP Inside Facilitators Group can be of great value to both inside and outside facilitators.***

### **Issues/Joys**

This Inside Facilitators Group can discuss desired workshop schedules: when Basic Workshops are needed, when Advanced Workshops would be in demand (given what is going on inside the prison), and when more inside facilitators are needed or desired, which might indicate a need to set up a T4F workshop.

The Inside Facilitators Group also can discuss difficulties, workshop snags and other concerns with inside or outside facilitators, while maintaining confidentiality. A support group also provides an opportunity for practicing workshop facilitating skills, such as working with a new exercise, a new light and lively or a new opening or closing. Some prisons require the Staff Sponsor to be present, but that also can support the program as the sponsor can witness, and even participate in, the exchange of ideas, and exercises. This can be very empowering to the inside facilitators and give them a greater sense of ownership in the program.

In some prison systems, support groups also can raise money from fellow inmates to support the AVP program on the inside and outside. The setting up of this inside group might be initiated by the prisoner facilitators or suggested to the administration by the outside team.

### **Challenges**

The greatest challenge for inside support groups is the overcoming the tendency to replicate the hierarchy of the prison, seeing this as an opportunity to have some control in a setting where prisoners have very little.

See Chapter 4 [Appendix](#): "AVP/NY Manual Part 3: When things go wrong[ " and the section above on "Dealing with Organizational Problems."

### **10 Rejuvenation Basics for Groups**

1. Hold onto and refer to the AVP Agreements and TP basics.
2. Seek outside support and consultation.
3. Bring in experienced people from outside.
4. Consider retreats for stepping back and looking at what is going on.
5. Celebrate what is already good and working.
6. Look at the structure with the group; divide tasks into smaller pieces.
7. Keep the group involved in the process.
8. Cross-fertilize with other groups or facilitators.
9. Use an AVP agenda format for all meetings.
10. Be patient and Trust the Process.

"There was a period in our program when the principles and foundation of AVP went out the window. You could see them drifting on the wind but couldn't catch them long enough to get through a facilitators' meeting without some kind of power play going on. The inside leadership team operated like a military junta. They'd go off to another room to meet and then come back with rules about dress code or some other irrelevant thing. T4Fs and training nights, operated on the boot camp approach: make these new facilitators tough so they will be prepared for anything, mostly situations that would never occur if you followed the ground rules which were sometimes ignored as well. In short, transforming TP to P.

It was a frustrating time for the two outside coordinators because the inside leadership controlled the callouts, few of the insiders were willing to stand up to them, and it was hard to rally support. Many of the most committed and respected facilitators stopped coming to our weekly meetings and to the workshops. Some of the participants in the T for F swore they wouldn't come to AVP after their experience in the training. We even discussed shutting down the program.

Instead, each time we saw a disempowering practice in the circle, we'd bring it to the group. Even if much of the circle didn't feel safe enough to speak, we kept bringing up the principles as written in the manuals; and we had personal conversations with the leadership team. Sometimes, one of the outside coordinators would sit in the corner and read her manual aloud while the obtrusive training sessions were conducted. Several people who came from other facilities to do a workshop with us shared their discomfort with what they saw going on. Finally we had an All Facilitator Workshop led by two former inmates from our facility,

that brought the dysfunction into the light.

After this workshop, we insisted on having an AVP agenda for the training nights, starting with a gathering and ending with a closing. We reminded everyone that the Ground Rules apply to all AVP groups, not just a workshop, and did our best to stick to them. Our hope was to guide the group back to an AVP path using Transforming Power. We wanted to eliminate the manipulation, intimidation and control that was choking the life out of the program. We wanted to create a safe circle where each of us was free to speak our truth.

After a while the inside coordinator, who was selected more for his prowess in running things than his knowledge of AVP, began to listen, to loosen his tight control, and to let the circle breathe and speak. Those in the circle began finding their voices, and more open discussion followed. Finally, the members of this leadership team either went home or were transferred. The new coordinator understood AVP, TP and leadership. It was as though the window had opened and fresh, clean air filled the room and our circle.

Throughout all of this, it was hard not to lose heart and give up. But we two outside coordinators supported each other, we turned to the area council and the state board for guidance, and we drew upon the many experienced facilitators and coordinators for support and counsel.

It took all of the TP Guides but especially:

- Reach for the good in others
- Base your position on truth
- Risk being creative
- Be willing to suffer for what is important.

And, most of all...

- Be patient and persistent.

Oh, yes, and

- Build a community based on honesty, respect and caring

