



The
TRANSFORMER

Supporting and Celebrating the Facilitators of AVP Workshops

**Through Conflict
to Community**

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Each issue is written by a different local group around the theme of their choosing. Let us know when your group wants to write an issue!

A Publication of AVP/USA

Through conflict to community

No matter that AVP is about resolving conflict through transformation of the individuals involved--the fact is I would rather just be polite and move through disagreements, hoping that trusting the process will take care of everything. However, sometimes we are required to tap into those skills we practice in a workshop and confront people who are challenging core AVP principles in their relationships with others and the group.

When I was in the bed-and-breakfast field, a statistic came across my desk that stunned me but made sense as well. If you have a guest who has a perfect visit, they will not rate their visit as high as the guest who has had a problem that was handled well. I joked that we needed to assure every guest had some little glitch so we could solve it beautifully. The flip side of this is that the person who has problems during their stay but never says a word or reports them and they are not resolved tells many more people about that experience than the person who was happy about their stay. As Janelle Barlow's book on service (*A Complaint is a Gift*) assures, a complaint truly is a gift.

To participants in AVP workshops, prison support groups or local community groups, conflict also might be seen as a gift. Conflict can be seen in terms of two people disagreeing or one person being a pain (an officer, a participant or a facilitator) or in pain. How we handle these conflicts reflects on AVP and offers everyone involved a lesson.

The dilemma is: when should one sit back and "trust the process" and when should one get involved? Here are some questions we might ask ourselves:

Is this more than my discomfort with this individual, or are others affected?

Is this situation affecting the workshop's progress, or is it impacting the local group's effectiveness?

Is this about me or the group?

*Pausing Pat, Transformer
Coordinating Editor, AVP/California
facilitator*

**When you don't know
you have a problem...**

This isn't about how things went "wrong" but about how we learned that things were not going as right as we thought they were until a participant helped us learn.

It was one of the first workshops we did on the "Hill" in Sing Sing, so we didn't have a number of inside facilitators on the team who were also from the same section of the prison and knew a lot of the participants from their block or the yard.

The second day at lunch, a participant came up to me and asked if he could speak to me about something. He asked if I had noticed that the four Latino participants had brought their Spanish-English dictionaries to the workshop. I had noticed but thought little of it. The participant explained that the English-speaking guys were deliberately using "big words" to show off to the civilians, and the Latinos were intimidated and were trying to help one another keep up



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The *TRANSFORMER*

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Dealing with a Conflict in a Workshop

Several years ago, I was a facilitator in a second-level workshop in a prison. One of the inside facilitators decided to use his own money to buy some snacks at the commissary for us to have on our breaks.

At a certain point in the workshop, he noticed that they were missing and probably had been taken by someone in the workshop. He asked if anyone had taken them by mistake, and no one responded. He became furious and prepared to leave the workshop, outraged that this would happen. We were able to calm him down and encouraged him to stay to work out this problem, which he did reluctantly.

Another facilitator suggested a fishbowl discussion, which we proceeded to set up. Many strong feelings were expressed as well as a variety of solutions, from "Everybody empty your pockets" to "Let's just forget about it and move on."

The facilitating team stressed this was the heart of AVP. We were going to work this out together in that it was pointless to go back to a prepared agenda when we were dealing with a potentially violent situation right in front of us.

As we continued the fishbowl and people seemed to feel heard, eventually another inside facilitator suggested that if the perpetrator brought the missing snacks to him, he would return them to the group and would not reveal who this person was. This was a solution that was acceptable to everyone, and we were able to proceed with the workshop in a spirit of cooperation, including the facilitator whose things had been taken.

The snacks were returned after the next break, and we all shared them.

Amazing Grace McGrath has been involved with AVP since her Basic in 1987 as coordinator of the AVP program at a prison in NY, AVP/ NY representative to AVP/USA and recently retired chair of the AVP/USA Education (Manual) Committee.

Continued from page 1

When you don't know you have a problem...

by taking turns looking up words and sharing the meanings.

Was I embarrassed!

I shared the information with our team, and we worked out ways to ease the situation. One of us might say, "I'm not sure how you mean that in this situation. Could you put that another way?" Or another of us might say (if it was appropriate) to the Latinos, "How would you say that in Spanish?" and then show an appreciation of an exchange of idioms or phrasing from language to language. The group began to affirm one another rather than compete, and we had a wonderful workshop with two of the Latinos eventually becoming facilitators.

Everyone in the workshop has insights, some of which we may not have. The moral for us as facilitators is that noticing behavior in the group is not enough; we have to ask ourselves "why."

Cynthia Loring MacBain (Caring Cynthia), New York

Contribute to upcoming issues of the Transformer

- Fall: Youth; Coordinated by AVP/USA Youth Committee, jubilantjudy@mac.com
- Winter: Re-entry; Coordinated by AVP/USA Re-entry Committee, jealadnam86@yahoo.com

Send electronic submissions directly to above emails and written copy to: AVP Transformer, P.O. Box 3294, Santa Barbara, CA 93130

If your local group or AVP/USA Committee would like to write an issue of the Transformer, email AVPpat@earthlink.net or send a letter to the above address.

When everything is going well?!

By Henry Rivera

I was the lead facilitator in, if my memory serves me correctly, a maximum-security prison. We were well into starting the workshop, and one of the facilitators was about to do Pattern Ball. He commenced to give the instructions and start the L & L when he abruptly threw his hands up in the air and stormed off, for what I thought was no apparent reason.

As lead facilitator I had to think fast, maintain the trust we were building and, at the same time, find out what was going on for my co-facilitator. I was AVP trained to realize the complete circle comes first, the miniature circle (team) is second and the “I” is last. Hence, we completed the L & L so as not to deny the opportunity to our participants.

Then we allowed all participants and facilitators to take a short break. I asked the team for a clinic. The fact that I had glossed over an exercise or not allowed him to do one he had wanted to before we got to the L & L juncture in the workshop. He apparently held this, could no longer contain what he was feeling and had to let it all out.

I was surprised to hear him speak about an issue I had not known bothered him so. I was under the impression all was going well.

I profusely apologized, asking for his okay to go along together as a team into the remainder of the workshop. I offered to listen more intently, with my spirit and not just my head to what we are all saying—and not saying—to each other. The workshop went well after we, as an AVP team, got over this hump in our pathway. I learned it is wise, whether in a prison or community setting, to pay attention not only to the time but also to the group process, especially if moving forward disrupts the team or group sense of purpose.

God Bless all of us who blunder. Had we not, we would have missed the opportunity for learning and growing.

Handsome Hank Rivera has served as a facilitator for 19 years both in prison and the free world and now lives in Greenwich, CT with his wife and daughter.

When life gives you leaks...

For the first time we were totally alone in San Quentin Prison (a weekend). The nearest guard was in a small post in a separate building two floors up, outside. Early in the evening the ceiling started to drip, leaking more and more until the floor was covered with water.

Without anyone trying to become the Leader, the men swept up the AVP materials, put them on a table in a dry corner and then turned to the small Education office where the water was drizzling down onto computers, copy machines and other office items. They quickly disconnected the machines, standing on a very wet floor and carried them into a nearby room that was still dry, again without specific direction from anyone. Though a perfect opportunity was available to sabotage a computer or other machine by walking directly into one of the many streams of water cascading down among us, no one came even close to making such a move. In ten minutes we were done and moved into another nearby room and went right on as though nothing had happened.

I made sure that each participant got a note in their folder regarding the excellent manner in which they had responded to the “monsoon.” (It turned out there had been a small tornado outside which we couldn’t see or hear, and the 100 year-old-plus building roof couldn’t handle the deluge that came with it.) No one on the staff or correctional officer side said anything whatever to us about it.

Bodacious Bob Barns, international facilitator

What is CLARG? The Committee of Local and Regional Groups

CLARG is comprised of representatives from each regional group, forming the bridge between all the local groups and AVP/USA.

CLARG assists local groups (sometimes called Area Councils),

- tracks the number of workshops given in each area,
 - updates the mailing list for AVP/USA,
 - assists in the establishment of new local groups,
 - helps to formulate policy or standards for facilitators,
 - promotes Seed Grants for new and struggling groups,
 - identified a list of Spanish-speaking facilitators who are willing to travel,
 - encourages facilitators to enter workshop statistics on the AVP/USA website
 - brings local concerns to the attention of the national organization,
 - and promotes attendance at the annual national gathering.
- This work is done at meetings at the annual gathering, timely conference calls, mailings, inter-visitation, and frequent emails.

CLARG proudly announces in the calendar year 2009, volunteers from AVP-USA organized:

- 491 Basic workshops with 7,692 participants in 98 prisons.
- 278 Advanced workshops with 4098 participants in those prisons,
- 858 people in prison were trained to be facilitators in 89 workshops and are ready to serve on a workshop team.
- In 60 community locations,
 - 66 Basic workshops with 806 participants
 - 32 Advanced workshop with 348 participants,
 - 23 T4F workshops with 211 participants
- For youth up to the age 23
 - 37 Basic workshops with 173 participants
 - 2 Advanced workshops with 35 participants.

Exercise: From Another Point of View — In Practice

Exercise found in the *AVP Manual for Second Level Course*, page D-84

We can all relate to the frustrations of having to deal with governmental bureaucracies, especially state prisons. The following is an occurrence where “From Another Point of View” was immediately useful.

In a Basic Workshop we had an outside facilitator requiring updated AVP volunteer credentials. To accomplish this, the facilitator left the workshop during lunch to minimize the impact on the group. Well, we all know of “Murphy’s Law.”

Our group restarted without one facilitator just fine. Halfway into the post-lunch exercise, the facilitator returned, obviously flustered and agitated, very upset over the perceived incompetence and indifference exhibited by prison personnel. It was later learned that these personnel were also quite displeased with the volunteer’s approach.

We soon found ourselves running short on time for our afternoon agenda. In clinic we decided to try an abbreviated version of “From Another Point of View.” The workshop remained as one group, seated in a circle. An inside facilitator then placed an empty chair in the middle of the group. The introduction to “From Another Point of View” was explained.

A couple of the standard scenarios were used; the group got into it. As a final scenario, the fresh and frustrating experience of our outside facilitator was put forth to the group with the question, “What good, positive or understandable things could be going on in the lives of those prison employees to cause them to act as they did?” A few negative thoughts were put forth like, “They’re jerks,” “They’re incompetent!” The positive parameters of the exercise were quickly restated; then a transformation occurred.

Popcorn style, the group chimed in with all types of understandable ideas: “Rules,” “family troubles,” “home issues,” “job displeasure,” etc. The outside facilitator sat quietly, listening to the group’s input during which the frustration drained from the face of the volunteer facilitator. Then, the outside facilitator stated a couple of understandable comments to the empty chair. Everyone noticed the effect of the exercise on a fresh, real-world situation.

After a smooth debrief, we were suddenly back on track time-wise. Our team support was great, and the community of the group got stronger — transforming power, exhibiting itself through “From Another Point of View” and benefiting the good of the group.

Contributed by an incarcerated facilitator who wanted to remain anonymous.

Light and Lively: Pattern Ball variations

(See *AVP Basic Manual*, page F-14)

- *For a quicker set-up:* Form a circle; pay close attention to the person on your right to whom you will be throwing and then to the person on your left who will be throwing to you. After clearly identifying those two people, call a hurricane. The group is now all mixed up. You can even start balls from several spots.

- *Type of balls:* “Kush” balls or anything else (bean bags, plastic lobsters, squawking chickens, rubber iguanas or whatever) that are catchable, soft and fun slide rather than roll away and are good for participants who may not be ball players.

- *Remember, you are giving your partner a gift -- this is not pitching practice!*

- *For the most delight:* Start with one ball, but keep in your pocket or in a bag more balls, as much as possible, are out of sight. The shock, surprise and joy that come forth as they realize there is more than one ball in play is marvelous.

- *Communication “lesson”:* At the end, ask how this Light and Lively reflects good communication. Stay standing and let it come popcorn style.

- *For an Advanced Workshop* (See *AVP Second Level Manual*, page G-13): Segue from Pattern Ball into “speed ball”-- a challenge to figure out how to get one ball from hand to hand touching each person around the pattern in under three seconds. Caution: Setting the pattern in the way you suggest would give away part of the solution to that challenge. Just let them figure it out.

Contributed by many facilitators.

Conference Quiz Answers

Answers to Conference Quiz from page 12

- 1- Memorial Day
- 2- San Francisco, California
- 3- Scholarships are very limited, start saving now, make your flights early, apply through your local group.
- 4- Get ready to have a blast/good time/ fun!! Information will be online in December

The meeting with the WARDEN

Recently, the question has arisen of whether you meet with the warden or just stick to what is working—or working enough—when offering AVP workshops in a prison. Is meeting with the warden a solution when things go wrong? Hopefully, you can meet prior to things going wrong and establish an ongoing relationship. A perfect time to begin conversations is when a new warden comes to a prison. A variation on this will work when you are introducing AVP to a new prison or a state administrator. See the new *AVP Organizing Kit* for this angle. AVP/California recently followed the lead of our mother ship, AVP/NY, and did an assessment of AVP/CA prison workshop programs. When this was presented to the Director of the Division of Adult Facilities and staff, he repeatedly encouraged local coordinating facilitators to meet quarterly with the wardens of their prisons. Many of the challenges that cropped up were things he felt the wardens would want to know and that he was not in a position to change. One Warden actually arranged to take his girlfriend on the volunteer's sailboat!

Why meet with the warden?

Are you saying, "Wardens are very busy people and have little time for our group of volunteers"? They are busy people, but so are you! And you are making his/her prison safer for staff and inmates while making that prison look good by reducing recidivism and empowering inmates to take charge of their own rehabilitation... free!

But, more than that, you may have snapshots of what is happening in that prison that he/she may not have. Or it is possible there may be things about which he/she has been marginally aware but has not taken action upon and will appreciate another perspective.

You are able to provide information he can use in his reports and, more than that, an in-depth understanding behind those "statistics."

By meeting with the warden, you maintain an ongoing relationship (sometimes called "juice") that might help you through the frustrations of getting into the prison, getting clearances and staff's—let us call it—hesitations. Wardens in some systems change regularly. This meeting gives a new warden a chance to know more about what is going on in this new location.

Your mental approach to this meeting

A real hesitancy has arisen among some coordinators about "going over" the head of whoever is your inside contact. Include this liaison—even ask that the appointment be made by him/her. Take this chance for you to brag about the person with whom you work. Surely, there is something that is working about which you can validate him/her. No doubt your contact has had challenges getting staff support for AVP at times. This meeting offers an opportunity to support, not critique, your inside contact. Sometimes you might have someone who is not performing quite how you wish. Here is your opening to talk these issues through, which might provide insights into how things could work better.

How does that meeting get set up?

First, get your facts collected: (CLARG page 4)

Compile statistics on your workshops. Include some or all of these depending on your situation:

- How many workshops of what kind have been offered
- How many prisoners have been trained in each type
- How many are facilitating
- How many prisoners are functioning in a lead/team coordinator role
- How many outside facilitators are involved
- Costs to outside facilitators--mileage, lodging, hours
- How many support-type groups you offered
- How many participants in these groups

Also, consider including specific issues that are a challenge for your group, such as:

- How many times you have been locked out
- How often you have to postpone the start of the workshop because participants are not released
- Clearance of outside facilitators

Second, prepare your local group:

No need to overwhelm the warden; just take a few facilitators who will represent you the best. Remember, this may be the warden's first impression of you or the only contact with you for a while. A super talkative person or one very distressed with staff may not be helpful in this first visit.



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The meeting with the WARDEN

Decide on your agenda and who will say what. This will vary depending on how much is already known about AVP. Usually, someone will be in the meeting who has never heard of AVP, so be prepared for this if only with materials. Do not list problems as part of the agenda, merely what you have been doing, “just the facts, ma’am.” Let the warden ask about the problems...

Get dates when the group can meet with the warden.

Third, make an appointment:

Depending on the protocol you feel is appropriate... Either ask your prison liaison staff member to set up an appointment with the warden, explaining that you want to share what you both have been doing (this can be a “let’s brag about our work” approach) or make the appointment with the warden and be sure the liaison is included. Be as transparent as possible about making the appointment even if part of your issues have to do with the prison liaison. No matter how this person is, you can find something positive--initially.

Tell the person with whom you make the appointment how long you would like. Start with an hour. Encourage other administrative staff to be invited also. The Warden will make that decision.

Fourth, prepare for the appointment:

Email to the appointment person, copying your liaison and the warden, the general agenda for the meeting, the compiled statistics and a cover letter confirming the date and time.

With those attending, consider role playing the meeting, with each having a chance to feel what it is like to be the different prison staff who might be in the meeting. Make a list of staff you wish to acknowledge.

Decide who will take notes, preferably a couple of you.

Call or email a couple of days prior to the appointment to verify that you are still on and who will be there. If it is cancelled, make a new appointment, at that time.

The meeting

This is the cool part and easier than you think.

Wardens tend to dress professionally, so dress up a bit--at least for this first appointment. You are peers and should look like it, just in case he/she is not understanding that yet.

Introduce yourselves in detail: past experience, degrees, present employment and AVP position description (“I relate to Lt. Gogetum with the clearances”). Remember that to them you (as a volunteer) are likely to be a strange bird they cannot fit into a slot. Help them to make you someone they respect and want to know.

Bring extra copies of what you emailed/sent.

When presenting your facts, do not make complaints or be derogatory. The warden and staff will see what they want to and often it will be what you want them to see. If you have an issue, ask an open-ended question. For example, staff are not letting the participants out in a timely manner. You might ask, “How do you think we should be handling getting the men to the workshop so we can start on time?” Or, state a fact and ask a question: “Our volunteers need to ask an officer to let them out of the room to use the bathroom; is there another way to handle this?” Validate what is working and supportive personnel.

It’s best if you do not provide answers to your concerns. Warden’s know how to solve problems. By providing solutions you are likely to show your lack of knowledge of the prison and it sounds like you think he/she doesn’t know what he/she is doing.

Reiterate what is agreed upon in solving a problem or something you are going to change on their behalf. Enjoy these people as very often they are committing their professional life to improving society, which means to their rehabilitation of their “charges.”

Relax... you are creating a new relationship that will benefit AVP.

After the meeting

Actively and immediately resolve any challenge that came up for which you are responsible. If you cannot resolve it immediately, keep the warden and others informed of your progress. Make that brief.

Send a very brief summary of what you think was discussed and agreed upon to your whole AVP group. After they have reviewed it, email it to the warden and staff in attendance. Remember that whatever you write is likely to be circulated widely, so err on the side of tact and love.

Report progress on issues discussed to the warden and others as it occurs as well as the lack thereof, but remember they are busy people and AVP is not their only concern.



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Physical Attraction and Power in the Prison

This is a continuation of an excerpt from the AVP/NY Volunteer Handbook, which was in the Transformer Spring issue, pages 9 & 10.

Expect to be physically attracted to a prisoner some time in your prison work. Almost nobody escapes this experience, regardless of age, marital status, sexual orientation or having foresworn all such relationships and feelings.

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 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 a 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 the 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. It allows both parties to fantasize but commits neither to live with the results of a relationship in the real world. The dark side of this is you may be exploiting another person without being aware you are doing so—by projecting your fantasies and needs on him or her that, in the real world, you cannot or will not follow through on.

What to do...

If you are seized by this strong emotion, 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” 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—and **BEFORE** you consider communicating with the person by telephone, mail or a visit.

In the meantime, remember that a sexually deprived environment breeds violent jealousy and other strong emotions, and a person who chooses a prisoner for a lover could elicit the enmity of both prisoners and officers, a situation that could become dangerous for the person she or he has “chosen.”

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.

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.

Under no circumstances should you give out your telephone number or personal information that might identify where you live.

Did you know that your T4F Grads are entitled to receive a free one-year subscription to *The Transformer*?

How? Type and email your list of the grads, including both their snail and email addresses, to Alan at transformer@avpusa.org. Community grads receive a free electronic newsletter; prisoners are mailed a paper issue. Offer is good for only one year after graduation and can only be submitted by the T4F team.

How can you assure your prisoner facilitators continue to receive *The Transformer* after the free year?

For only \$5/year your local group can continue to support inside facilitators with a subscription.

- Do this by having it directly mailed to the prisoner, OR
- To assure it's received, have all newsletters delivered to your home or a prison staff member's home and carry it in, OR
- Copy your subscription to the newsletter and carry it in to your *inside* team members.

How can your community facilitators receive the newsletter economically?

- For only \$10/year each, your local group can take advantage of the group rate for 5 or more **paper** subscriptions.
- For \$5/year/each from at least five or more facilitators, you can receive **electronic** subscriptions by email. Both these collective subscriptions must be sent in and paid for at the same time in order to receive this big discount.
- For only \$10, individuals can choose to go “green” and receive the newsletter by email for a year.
- Write an issue of the newsletter and receive \$100 credit toward your group's subscriptions. See below.

Become involved in writing your own *Transformer*

Your local group, region or committee can create your own issue of the AVPUSA newsletter. Each quarter a different group or committee submits a theme for an upcoming issue and then writes for the issue.

Dealing with Inappropriate Behavior

Continuation of an article excerpted from the AVP/NY Volunteer Manual in Spring 2010 Transformer

A. Processes for addressing inappropriate behavior in a prison workshop or a prison support group

In our over 30-year history, AVP/NY has witnessed serious inappropriate behavior, such as flashing (exposing one's genitals), threatening language or behavior and sexual harassment. If an outside (civilian) volunteer, prison staff person or inside (prisoner) volunteer behaves inappropriately, the behavior must be addressed.

AVP seeks to build community based on openness and trust, addressing conflict directly with care and compassion. Therefore, whenever and wherever possible, it is preferred that the issue or a participant's or facilitator's behavior be addressed by the facilitation team in consultation with the inside and outside coordinators. Consequences might include suspension from participation in AVP for a period.

The following are guidelines, not rules or law but guides, to the people who make up the AVP/NY family.

Decisions are made based on a specific case by the people involved, together with the AVP/NY Board Council.

1. Inappropriate behavior by a prison staff person
 - a. Serious inappropriate behavior by a prison staff person must be reported to the AVP outside coordinator and the prison sergeant or prison staff advisor.
 - b. You likely will be asked to make a report, so you will need to notify the facilitation team that you will need to leave the workshop for a time. You may wish to list witnesses, if there were any, after gaining their permission to do so.
 - c. Any severe incidents, even those resolved well, should be reported to

an outside body, such as the AVP/NY Board Council, the regional AVP/NY Area Council, or the group that facilitates in the prison.

2. Inappropriate behavior by an inside (prisoner) volunteer
 Serious inappropriate behavior by a prisoner shall be reported to the AVP outside coordinator and the prison administration. Reporting such incidents is protection for the victim and for others whose safety could be jeopardized by becoming involved. Failure to report an incident may jeopardize the program.

Prison administrators have suggested the following process:

1. Report the incident to the correction officers (guards) on duty. If this is uncomfortable for you, ask to speak to a sergeant or staff advisor.
2. The prison administration likely will ask that you make a report, so you will need to prepare the facilitation team for your absence. You may wish to list witnesses, if there were any, after gaining their permission to do so.
3. Any severe incidents, even those resolved well, should be reported to an outside body, such as the AVP/NY Board Council, the regional AVP/NY Area Council, or the group that facilitates in the prison as well as the AVP outside coordinator.
4. If the inappropriate behavior was done by an inside facilitator, the incident and any action taken by the group facilitating in the prison shall be reported to the AVP/NY office so that it can be relayed to another AVP outside coordinator, should that facilitator be transferred.
5. If the inappropriate behavior was done by an inside facilitator and the AVP coordinators and the AVP/NY Board Council suspend that person from the AVP volunteer list, he or she may request that the AVP/NY Board Council reexamine his or her status at any time.

The AVP/NY Board Council recommends the following preventa-

tive measures:

1. Outside coordinators foster real team building among inside and outside facilitators that creates space for frank discussion of concerns regarding behaviors that may "invite" inappropriate behavior. If concerns are raised, the team shall discuss the team's response should a person behave inappropriately.
 2. Inside facilitators include a policy of no tolerance for disrespectful behavior in the opening talk.
 3. If offensive and/or hurtful behavior occurs, AVP facilitators and area councils need to be prepared to offer support for the victim(s).
 4. Outside coordinators take active responsibility for outside volunteers and carefront them about behaviors that may invite unwanted attention.
 5. Outside coordinators meet with the prison administration staff advisor to find out what channels an outside volunteer might use to report an incident.
- B. Processes for addressing inappropriate behavior by an AVP/NY outside (civilian) volunteer**
 The Alternatives to Violence Project seeks to build community based on openness and trust by addressing conflict directly with care and compassion. Therefore, whenever and wherever possible, it is preferred that difficulties and/or inappropriate behavior in any workshop be addressed by the facilitation team and by the facilitation team in consultation with the inside and outside coordinators in the case of prison workshops. The NYS Department of Correctional Services has a set of rules and regulations for outside volunteers. AVP/NY expects outside volunteers to respect and adhere to those rules. Questioning of rules should be done through the AVP outside coordinator and the regional AVP/NY Area Council. The term "inappropriate behavior" here refers not only to dis-



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Dealing with Inappropriate Behavior

respecting the rules we have agreed to, but also to behavior that, based on our own inner sense, is deemed inappropriate.

Examples of inappropriate behavior in a prison setting: A female outside volunteer physically touches a male prisoner in a personalized manner such as casually holding hands, rubbing a knee, leg or arm, baring her feet or other actions insensitive to the reality that many of the men may be socially and sexually isolated for long periods of time.

Serious inappropriate behavior by a volunteer during a prison workshop shall be reported to the AVP/NY outside coordinator and, in the case of a community workshop, to the lead facilitator, who shall report it to the AVP/NY Area Council that sponsored the workshop. Failure to report an incident in either instance may jeopardize the program.

Guidelines for the people who make up the AVP/NY family

People make decisions based on a specific case involved, together with the AVP/NY Board Council.

In the case of inappropriate behavior by an outside (civilian) volunteer in a prison workshop or support group:

1. The AVP outside coordinator shall meet with the volunteer to hear what happened. The coordinator shall then report to the regional AVP/NY Area Council and the AVP/NY Board Council. The volunteer shall have the opportunity to participate in both sessions.

2. The volunteer and the regional AVP/NY Area Council may meet at the request of either the volunteer or the Area Council.

3. If the incident is reported within the AVP/NY organization only, the regional AVP/NY Area Council, in consultation with the AVP/NY Board Council, shall determine appropriate action—i.e., issuing a warning, suspension or loss of AVP volunteer status. Should the AVP/NY Area

Council suspend or revoke a person's volunteer status, the Area Council shall inform the prison administration of the action taken. (If the person volunteered in other prison programs, the Area Council also shall inform the prison administration of the nature of the incident.)

4. If a volunteer has developed a special personal relationship with an individual prisoner, the AVP/NY Board Council shall be informed and an AVP clearness committee may meet with the volunteer to seek clearness together and a path forward. AVP workshops and support groups are not appropriate spaces or means to develop such relationships. Should the volunteer wish to continue the special relationship, he or she shall be asked to forfeit his or her volunteer status, and his or her name shall be removed from the AVP volunteer list that the AVP outside coordinator provides the prison. Should the volunteer no longer wish to continue the special relationship, he or she may request reinstatement as a volunteer. The regional AVP/NY Area Council, in consultation with the AVP/NY Board Council, shall consider the request.

5. If a volunteer has been suspended by a prison administration with justification, a letter shall be written by the AVP/NY Board Council President to the prison administration and to the NYS Department of Correctional Services Volunteer Services Coordinator, acknowledging the suspension.

6. If the AVP/NY Board Council takes action concerning a volunteer, the Board Council President shall notify the administration of the relevant prison or prisons and the NYS Department of Correctional Services.

7. If an AVP/NY volunteer has been suspended by a prison administration and believes the action to be unjust, the following process may be followed:

a. The AVP outside coordinator

shall write to the NYS Department of Correctional Services Deputy of Programs at the relevant prison and request a meeting with him or her and with the volunteer. The coordinator may follow up the meeting with a telephone call to the Deputy of Programs.

b. If a meeting does not take place, or if no agreement is reached at the meeting, the AVP outside coordinator may call a special meeting of the regional AVP/NY Area Council or, if the Area Council is not active, may request a Committee of Care comprised of members of the AVP/NY Board Council. Representatives from the Area Council or the Committee of Care shall meet with the volunteer and the AVP outside coordinator to discuss options and seek a path forward.

Note: Since AVP/NY has no legal agreement with the NYS Department of Correctional Services, the AVP organization does not have legal representation available for unresolved situations.

In the case of inappropriate behavior by a facilitator in a community workshop:

1. The lead facilitator and/or coordinator shall meet with the facilitator to hear what happened. The lead facilitator/coordinator then shall report to the regional AVP/NY Area Council and the AVP/NY Board Council. The facilitator shall have the opportunity to participate in both sessions.

2. The facilitator and the Area Council may meet at the request of either the facilitator or the Area Council.

3. The Area Council, in consultation with the AVP/NY Board Council, shall determine appropriate action—i.e., issuing, in writing and verbally, a warning, suspension or forfeiture of AVP facilitator status.

4. The facilitator may request the Area Council re-examine his or her status at any time.

AVP's Beginnings: A response to Attica...

By Eddie Ellis

In September, 1971, several incarcerated men at Attica Prison led an uprising to protest inhumane treatment and overcrowding. After four days of negotiation, state troopers were called in. The rebellion ended with 9 hostages and 28 incarcerated men dead. The insurrection changed the entire dynamic within prisons and initiated a national discussion about prison policy and practices.

New York State prisons had very few programs at that time. Friends (Quaker) worship groups were among the very few. There were no educational programs or counseling, so the worship groups attracted those seeking opportunities for in-depth discussion.

The men involved in the rebellion at Attica were transferred to prisons around the state. Many arrived at Green Haven. New programs were initiated with the idea that if we could keep the men busy, they would not want to rebel again. Carl Berry, a progressive administrator, was appointed Deputy Superintendent for Programs at Green Haven. Among the innovations he instituted was a first of its kind survey of the population, asking the men themselves to make recommendations and design programs that would meet their needs. College-level educational programs and the ability to call families were high on the list.

During this period, Green Haven was poorly supervised and dangerous. Loan-sharking, open drug markets and gambling were common. These activities resulted in violent attacks almost daily. To avoid attack from behind, men were forced to stand in the yard with their

backs against the wall. Most of them were concerned about their physical safety in such an environment. Many were just beginning long sentences of 25- years-to-life or more and wondered how they might make the prison safer.

Around 1968, a small group of men at Green Haven formed a Think Tank. Under the guidance of Reverend Ed Muller, senior chaplain, they studied to make sense of their incarceration and prepare for their eventual return to the community.

Their task was to develop programs and services of significance to themselves and, equally important, to the communities to which they would return.

Larry White was one of the founders and its leader. I arrived at Green Haven in 1972.

Key among the discussions was the question of violence, both in the prison and in the community. The Think Tank reached out to Larry Apsey and the Quaker Worship Group for assistance since Quakers had a long history of non-violent resistance, pacifism and civil disobedience. Quakers recommended consulting Bernard Lafayette, an aid to Dr. Martin Luther King. Lafayette had led non-violent training workshops for those planning to participate in civil rights demonstrations and non-violent civil disobedience. He synthesized the training into three days and in the fall of 1975 brought it to Green Haven. I was skeptical

about the non-violent movement and Dr. King's approach. Being born and raised in Harlem, New York, I had been influenced greatly by the teaching of Malcolm X, but I decided to participate anyway. It was one of the most powerful experiences of my life.

The workshop was about alternatives to violence, rather than "non-violence," and featured methods for reaching consensus and compromise and resolving conflicts rather than simply reacting. It also provided the tools needed to de-escalate potentially violent and dangerous confrontations. Most of the men, who participated, including me, went on to take an Advanced Workshop and Training for Facilitators with Lafayette.

Larry Apsey, a magnet and a ball of energy, was the driving force that made it all happen.

In discussions with the prison administration about how the workshop would run, the power of his ideas and his thinking were difficult to refute. Deputy Superintendent Berry agreed to allow him to operate this workshop all day, 9:00am until 9:00pm, three consecutive days, to permit men to be counted outside their cells and to serve meals in the workshop area, all unheard of measures at the time. The Green Haven AVP Project established the model for all future workshops.

Easy Eddie Ellis is the host and executive producer of "On The Count," broadcast over radio station WBAI in New York (www.wbai.org). He is currently an adjunct instructor and executive director of the Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions at Medgar Evers College, CUNY.



Conference Quiz

- 1 - What weekend is the AVP/USA annual conference always held?
2 - Where will it be next year?
3 - Are scholarships available?
4 - How should you prepare?
See answers on page 4

HOT OFF THE PRESSES

The completely revised AVP/USA Organizing Kit: A Guide for those Initiating or Strengthening AVP in Communities and Prisons

Whether you are just starting with AVP or have been a facilitator for a long time and are looking at opening a new prison, starting a new community program or are wanting ideas in 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 workshops including recruitment
- Local group of community facilitators – ("Area Council") including problem solving
- Prison workshop program including prison support groups

Order at www.AVPUSA.org or from order form in this newsletter. Only \$10

What have you done recently?

In 2009 AVP/USA offered 1018 total workshops with 14,373 participants led by 1229 inside facilitators and 651 outside facilitators. 85% of these workshops were given in federal, state, and local prisons.

Active AVP programs are in 34 states plus D.C. and V.I. For more details go to www.avpusa.org and look for

CLARG 2009 Annual Report

What is CLARG? Committee of Local and Regional Groups. Go to page 4 for more detailed information.

AVP

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