

AVP (Alternatives to Violence Project)

Establishing an AVP Program in a CDCR Prison

Purpose of an AVP program:

- The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) is a multicultural volunteer organization that is dedicated to reducing interpersonal violence in our society.
- AVP workshops present 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.
- The AVP program offers experiential workshops that empower individuals to liberate themselves from the burden of violence.

AVP/California goals:

- AVP workshops offered monthly within CDCR prisons to volunteer inmate-participants.
- Workshops led by volunteer facilitation teams of outside and inmate volunteer facilitators.
- An outside volunteer liaison at each prison, keeping in regular contact with prison officials and with state program representatives to assure the program's success and the maintenance of appropriate relationships between inmates and outside volunteers.
- Provide an ongoing understanding of program concepts to the broadest number of both prison inmates and the local community through peer and facilitator involvement.

Process of developing an AVP program:

Step One: The Request

- A CDCR prison requests an AVP program be developed, at which time the local community is approached. Or,
- The local community requests that AVP be offered and approaches AVP or the prison.

Step Two: Trainer Assigned and Local Community Commitment

- Experienced AVP trainer(s) from the area council or a state AVP group is/are assigned to work with the prison and the community to develop facilitators as well as prison and community understanding of the program.
- The experienced trainer works with the local community sponsor(s) (Quaker Meeting, service or religious group, etc.) to develop their roles and responsibilities in the ongoing support of the program. This support or care comes in multiple forms, including: assisting in promoting community workshops; handling registrations for community workshops; supplying housing and meals to facilitators coming from outside the community; providing funds for materials to supporting the community workshops with a location and food; and, of course, taking the workshops.

Step Three: Community workshops

Three levels of community AVP workshops are offered (Basic, Advanced or Second Level, and Training for Facilitators (T4F)) in order to create a body or team of a dozen trained volunteer facilitators.

Step Four: Initial Prison Contacts

- A local community AVP liaison is assigned to communicate with the prison on an ongoing basis.
- This individual then involves the local prison in the development of infrastructure, including, where appropriate:
 - Meeting with the warden
 - Working with prison staff sponsor
 - Meeting with the Inmate Family Council,
 - Meeting with Men's/Women's Advisory Council
 - Possibly offering the AVP workshop to staff

A prison contact is assigned or developed to work with the outside liaison.

Step Five: Developing and Maintaining Appropriate Relationships within Prisons

- A local system based on AVP California standards is developed and accepted whereby all volunteers understand their proper roles in relation to inmates and vice versa.
- The prison processes volunteers efficiently to enter the prison to facilitate workshops as well as developing a method for inmates to volunteer to participate in the workshop.
- AVP works with the prison to get inmates signed up for workshops.
- AVP facilitators are re-oriented annually on their responsibilities as representatives of the program.
- This system is reviewed annually by the prison contact and the community liaison.

Step Six: Workshops Begin Inside the Prison

- Through the system developed in Step Five, inmates are signed up for workshops on a voluntary basis.
- Basic workshops are offered to inmate volunteer participants for several months by a team of outside volunteers.
- Second Level workshops are offered to inmates who have completed the Basic workshop.
- Training for Facilitators workshop is offered to inmates who have completed the Second Level workshop.
- Trained inmate apprentices begin working with the outside facilitation team on the next workshop series. During this process intense evaluation and oversight takes place until the council of outside facilitators approves the apprentice.

Step Seven: Regular Monitoring

Supervision of AVP prison programs takes place on several levels:

- Outside facilitators and local liaison relate to state organizations and area councils to track progress of program and individuals, through statistical reporting and in-depth evaluations of each workshop. (Facilitators, apprentices and the program are evaluated following each workshop and these forms are submitted to the area council.)
- Regular meetings of the area council provide opportunities to review and solve problems as well as check the progress of program.
- AVP/California facilitates training in preventing and handling problems.

AVP/USA functions as a resource for how problems and new programs have been handled elsewhere. Expertise from other states and countries is always available to local programs.