

AVP California Update

Alternatives to Violence Project

Summer 2005

P.O. Box 3294, Santa Barbara CA 93130 800/905-6765

www.AVPCalifornia.org

Sea change in California prisons!

A paradigm shift in California prisons? Can it be real? From the doldrums to a buzz of activity, from rejection to more enthusiastic invitations than one can handle...

The thirty-year-old Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) weekend prison workshops—found throughout the world,—were initiated by inmates in New York's Green Haven Prison in consultation with Quakers. The workshop incorporates inmates as part of the facilitation team in a highly participatory and practical workshop, which has shown to reduce violence in the prison by 60% and decrease the returns to prison by graduates of the program. See sidebar "Statistic..."

After years of bureaucratic rebuffs and suspensions by the California Department of Corrections of the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) prison programs, something changed; things are happening now.

Actual Department of Corrections changes

On July 1, the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency and the departments and boards within the agency became the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

This change is not just a name. Secretary Rod Hickman (reporting directly to the Governor) has put teeth into this new moniker with an evidence-based approach, solid planning and research. His Undersecretary Jeanne Woodford, who has made national news with the changes she instituted while warden at San Quentin, has described "AVP as an awesome program." Backing up this praise she invited AVP/CA to speak to all 33 state prisons' wardens, plus ongoing help in developing contacts within the system. AVP is now included in Hickman's Community Collaboration Conferences.

A whopping 23 out of 33 total wardens indicated in interest in welcoming monthly AVP workshops in their prisons.

Why AVP is attractive

AVP is of interest to wardens and the department, because it is free and proven:

Locally self-sustaining Once started the community workshops fund the prison workshops.

Evidence-based success Recent research of AVP has demonstrated its effectiveness.

All volunteer facilitators The greatest cost of a program is generally staff. Commitment of volunteers impact inmate participants.

History of inmate and community involvement Finally this has value to the department and is a significant commitment of AVP's.

Statistics on AVP success in changing lives

Delaware Research on Recidivism

Return to prison after one year:

Life Skills class – 17.8%

AVP – 9.9%

Control group – 25%

AVP graduates re-offending after 3 years, 32.9% (cumulative). **Usual rate is 60-80%.**

With no AVP, returning to prison for any reason:
3 years 48.1% (cumulative)

With AVP: within 3 years of release, with only Basic Workshop: 37% return to prison

With Basic plus Advanced, Trainer, etc: 27%

Violence reduction inside the prison

60% reduction in assaults between inmates who have taken AVP workshops.

Off and running...

A steering committee of facilitators (see sidebar) from around the state meets regularly to map out the next steps to meet this challenge. Diligent follow-up calls to the wardens or their designated

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contacts are ongoing. Community contacts are being developed. A grant is written.

New AVP programs

The following prisons have either actively pending or have begun AVP workshops:

- Blythe – Chuckawalla Valley State Prison
- Jamestown – Sierra Conservation Center
- Chowchilla-Central CA Women’s Facility
- Susanville- Two prisons
- Soledad-
- Lancaster
- Tehachapi

AVP local prison programs are in San Luis Obispo, San Diego, Chino, Sonoma, Dublin.

Greatest Challenge

Developing local participation is the greatest challenge now. AVP has traditionally grown organically: Someone in an area or prison gets interested and starts a program at their speed. AVP California is catalyzing the development of programs on a fast-growth plan. Having experienced past changes in corrections, how long this door will be open to AVP is a concern. The Steering Committee is committed to meeting the requests for programs as long as we have people and financial support to do so.

Where is the funding coming from?

AVP/CA projected budget for the next nine months is \$120,000 to open 10 new programs. The Steering Committee is individually donating \$75,000 of in-kind travel and office expenses. Hotels and individuals are contributing \$25,000 in lodging costs.

\$20,000 remains to be raised.

Though grants are being applied for, they take up valuable workshop and local AVP development time; donations are needed.

To maintain its independence, AVP USA has set the standard of not accepting payment from the department of corrections.

No society that feeds its children on tales of successful violence can expect them not to believe that violence in the end is rewarded.

-Margaret Mead, anthropologist (1901-1978)

Needed now

To meet this challenge, AVP needs:

1. Trained facilitators (and those interested) to sign up on the AVP CA database:
www.AVPCalifornia.org
2. Community groups to sponsor local AVP programs
3. Individual contributions
4. Help in calling local community people to recruit local AVP facilitators and donations of space, lodging and materials.

AVP California Steering Committee

Formed and elected by consensus by all California AVP facilitators in attendance at the annual AVP USA conference in May 2005. All made a significant time commitment and are all on sabbatical, working part-time or retired. Two former-prisoner facilitators function as active consultants.

Pat Hardy, Clerk/President, Santa Barbara

Co-founder /Co-CEO national association, 15-year AVP facilitator trainer, Clerk of Quaker Meeting

Stephen Matchett, Treasurer, San Francisco

Editor, criminal defense lawyer, regional American Friends Service Committee Finance Committee chair

Steve Birdlebough, Santa Rosa

Former deputy district attorney, criminal defense lawyer, legislative liaison for the California Judicial Council

Katherine Youngmeister, Berkeley

Retired CPA and CFO, American Friends Service Committee regional and national board and committee member

Alice Waco, Santa Rosa

Retired teacher/counselor, 13 years AVP in prisons and community ; Friends Outside jail

George Ramos, Ph.D., Nipomo

Retired computer scientist / manager. Full -time Beyond War volunteer, 1983-84. 9-year AVP facilitator

Bob Barns, Nevada City

12 years AVP: 10 states, 16 prisons, eight countries, Quaker

Vicki Rumbaugh, M.S., Torrance

Trained therapist, worked with probation/at risk youth, 5-year AVP facilitator

Evelyn Cohen, MSW, LCSW, La Jolla

Retired clinical social worker, 14-year AVP facilitator-Donovan Correctional Facility

Consultants:

Rossie Johnson, Lancaster

Termite Control Technician, became AVP facilitator in 2002 at California Men’s Colony

Mark Thomas, M.A.

Transpersonal social psychologist/educator, 15-year AVP facilitator

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