

## **Pilot project in AVP ILTAGs of the AVP/CA Prison Coordinators Council**

### **Present situation:**

Inmate Leisure Time Activity Groups (ILTAGs) are support/activity groups initiated and run by inmates in CDCR prisons. Generally these groups have a paid sponsor from the institution who sits in on the meetings. In some cases the sponsor is an outside volunteer

The CDCR Department Operations Manual (DOM) provides details on how ILTAGs are to operate. In AVP/CA's 2012 assessment of its programs in CDCR, three AVP prison programs reported the existence of ILTAGs. Today that number is higher. The role of the outside AVP/CA volunteer Prison Coordinator around ILTAGs has been largely hands-off, with some consultation with the leadership of the group.

Existing AVP/CA policy (see below) specifies that ILTAGs do not oversee AVP workshops.

### **What brought this issue up?**

With over 3,600 graduates last year, 15,000 inmates trained in the Basic workshop, 410 inmate facilitators and 37 inmate Team Coordinators, AVP/CA has inmates ready to start programs in most prisons. Some of our best inside prison coordinators have been moved to prisons where there is no AVP program, and they are eager to make something happen where they are. However AVP/CA lacks sufficient outside volunteers to introduce and sustain a full workshop program. This could be remedied through active recruitment and training of volunteers, ideally to be undertaken by paid outreach coordinators in the areas of the institutions currently lacking an AVP program.

Since 2005, AVP ILTAGs and other inmate groups have raised substantial money for AVP/CA through charitable fund raising activities. The formation of AVP ILTAGs in institutions where there are willing and qualified inmate facilitators but currently no AVP program could both (1) provide an outlet and opportunity for those individuals to keep up their AVP skills and continue spreading the message of nonviolence at the institution and (2) through fund raising to support the hiring of an Outreach Coordinator in their area, hasten the establishment of an AVP program there, to the benefit of a great number of inmates and the institution as a whole.

### **THE CONCEPT:**

AVP/CA proposes that an AVP ILTAG can operate in the absence of an active AVP workshop program, under the following guidelines:

- The ILTAG fills a need as a stop-gap until an AVP workshop program can be started at the institution. It will not conduct full-on AVP workshops, however inmate facilitators can offer practice mini-workshops (1-2 hrs). NO certificates can be given out that might convey that an AVP workshop has been taken.
- Certified inmate facilitators considering forming an AVP ILTAG are encouraged first to contact the AVP/CA Prison Coordinators Council for approval, before approaching the prison staff. The Council's approval will depend on the involvement of dependable and qualified inmate facilitators. A working copy of "AVP" ILTAG ByLaws will be made available to local groups to use as an initial draft. The inmates will then proceed following permission from the prison warden.
  - AVP/CA will name an AVP/Consultant to be the support person for the ILTAG. The Consultant or other AVP/CA volunteers conduct a daylong training with the inmates in consensus decision-making and other AVP group-dynamic and community-building concepts before the ILTAG is launched. When the ILTAG is up and running, the Consultant will:
    - maintain a working relationship with the sponsor
    - be available to the sponsor and the inside facilitators by mail
    - meet with the group every six months to offer additional training and support

- It is recommended the staff (or outside volunteer) sponsor will have completed at least a Basic AVP workshop.

The ILTAG can raise funds to hire an AVP/CA Outreach Coordinator in their region, with the goal of launching a full workshop program inside their prison. **The ILTAG's continued existence will depend on the continued presence and involvement of qualified inmate facilitators. If such participation ceases due to release or transfer of inmates, the ILTAG will need to be discontinued.**

• 2/22/14

### **Alternatives to Violence Project/California (AVP/CA) and CDCR Inmate Leisure Time Activity Groups (ILTAG)**

The AVP/California Steering Committee met **August 12, 2010**, and has come to consensus on the following recommendations regarding CDCR ILTAGs:

Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) ILTAGs are presently operating successfully in a number of prisons in CDCR and we recommend their expansion in order to deepen the understanding and premises of AVP in the yards.

**1-AVP ILTAGs cannot function as an AVP ILTAG unless an active workshop program is in being offered regularly.**

2- AVP ILTAGs can operate independently without an outside AVP facilitator and solely a prison staff sponsor, if the outside facilitators in consultation (with the inside Team Coordinators) decide this is workable. Generally, it is advisable to have mentored prisoner Team Coordinators in place prior to independence from community facilitators.

3- AVP ILTAGs can include people who haven't taken a Basic workshop. This has shown to foster interest among a broader prison population in taking the workshop

**4- AVP ILTAGs are support groups and are not providing supervision of the AVP workshop program.** In order to provide ongoing continuity regardless of ILTAG funding, the workshop program shall still be linked to the CRM or the warden's designee.

5-AVP ILTAGs are not independent AVP Councils/Local Groups, but should be included as part of the local community council when one is functioning.

6- The ILTAG group shall follow the rules of the prison when writing up By Laws but shall use as base those recommended by AVP/CA inside facilitators.

Sample on <http://avp-california.org/facilitators/index.php#PrisonSupportGroups> .

7- CDCR staff sponsors are encouraged to take Basic AVP and Advanced AVP workshops in the community, especially if no community facilitators are liaisons at the ILTAG meetings.