## Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) Linked to Dramatic Reductions in Inmate Anger

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The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) is a nonviolence program that has provided thousands of life-changing workshops to prison inmates over the past 35 years. It has also been given to prison staff with much the same results. An example of this is Steve, who had a history of violent outbursts. He was a correctional officer in the psych unit in the Philadelphia Prison System. Because of his violent outbursts against inmates, the warden ordered Steve to be transferred off the psych unit. The lieutenant asked the warden to give Steve another chance and to let him take an AVP workshop for staff. The warden reluctantly consented, but stated Steve's behavior had "better change." Six months after the training, the lieutenant reported that Steve had totally changed his attitude and in fact, had been honored as the "Employee of the Year." This is but one of thousands of stories about the effectiveness of The Alternatives to Violence Project.

A recent study\* in a Minnesota prison has provided objective evidence of the Alternatives to Violence Project's (AVP) effectiveness. Researchers measured the effects of AVP on reducing an individual's tendency to become angry. After experiencing only the Basic 20-hour workshop, participants' predisposition to anger was significantly reduced. After experiencing the advanced workshop and training for facilitators, the impact was even greater. All tolled, the average score decreased from about 20 to a score of 15, a 25% reduction. This dramatic reduction in tendency to get angry continued to the two-year follow-up assessment. This suggests AVP is an effective method for reducing anger.

These results are consistent with other studies that showed AVP reduced inmate behavior write-ups by 60% and recidivism by 46% [three years after release, only 13.5% committed a new felony.

Catalyzing this committee and working closely with it is AVP facilitator Laura Roberts, Ph.D., Statistician and Research Methodologist enthuses "It is very exciting to be working with the AVP community to measure the effectiveness of the program. All the results we've seen thus far are very promising and bode well for more and more development of the program. I look forward to a long and productive relationship with all my colleagues in AVP."

For additional information on developing a research project of your community or prison, contact Laura Roberts, Ph.D., at Right Angle Research, rightangleresearch@comcast.net

\*The construct validity and conclusion validity of this study are strong as evidenced by a rigorous statistical treatment of the data and a well-validated research instrument, the State and Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI). With regard to external validity, the results can be generalized to other inmate populations that are similar to the inmates in the Minnesota prison where the study was conducted. Inmates' ages ranged from 21 to 66, with a mean of 33 years. The typical inmate in the study had completed 12 years of school. Most of the inmates were white or black (about an even split) with an additional 10% Hispanic and a few Asians. Most of the men (86%) were unmarried (including men who were divorced, separated, or widowed). Thus, with regard to external validity, we would expect the findings to generalize to other prison populations that match these demographics.