

AVP/California Volunteer Conduct Guidelines regarding Sexual Harassment and Relationships within Workshops

All volunteers are expected to adhere to AVP's Mission, Philosophy, and conduct guidelines regarding Sexual Harassment and Relationships within Workshops.

AVP Mission

The Alternatives to Violence Project is a multi-cultural volunteer organization that is dedicated to reducing interpersonal violence in our society

AVP Philosophy

AVP is an all-volunteer organization. Participation in the program is voluntary, and all team members are volunteers. Workshop leaders/team coordinators and facilitators are all volunteers; as are local coordinators and AVP/California Steering Committee members.

AVP workshops are experiential, and begin by building a sense of community and a safe environment based upon honesty, respect, caring, and affirmation of one another.

Team members don't bring answers: we expect that within the group we will find creative alternatives; that is, choices of good ways to act to solve disagreements, problems and conflicts, including those that may arise within the course of the workshop.

Sexual Harassment

AVP/California is committed to providing workshop volunteers with an environment that is free of unlawful sexual harassment, which includes unsolicited and unwanted behaviors including those with a sexual connotation especially if repetitive. Examples include, but are not limited to: suggestive looks or gestures; sexual comments; teasing or jokes with sexual content; letters, e-mails, messages and calls or material of a sexual nature; imposed closeness and touching; pressure for dates; discrimination on the basis of sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, or any other category protected by applicable local, state, or federal laws. Volunteers should bring any incidents of perceived sexual harassment to the immediate attention of the team coordinator, local coordinator or any AVP/California steering committee member for appropriate follow-up.

Relationships within Workshops

Most workshops are powerful emotional experiences, and we rightly enjoy the feelings of love and joy that come out of having built a community of trust and love. Participants often experience a sense of vulnerability, and facilitators need to be especially mindful

of their role in creating and maintaining a safe place for participants to have these and other feelings the workshop may bring up.

A facilitator may find himself or herself developing a special relationship with one person in a workshop – having feelings that are stronger for that person than for others. When this occurs it is important to take a step back and seek help in sorting those feelings out. This could occur in a team meeting. “Were there any particular participants to whom I was attracted or with whom I particularly struggled that I would like to discuss?” (see AVP/CA’s Facilitator/Workshop Guidance & Evaluation sheet) can be a useful prompt in such situations. Special care must be taken by facilitators to guard against any action taken based upon these feelings within a workshop, as this could compromise the workshop or may be construed as sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment could also occur between participants in a workshop. Even though close relationships may naturally form between participants in a workshop, any participant who feels that he or she is being sexually harassed during a workshop, or observes sexual harassment within a workshop, should immediately bring this to the attention of the team coordinator or any facilitator, who has a responsibility to respond with appropriate seriousness and to follow up as necessary.