

## **Corrections Roundtable PRAASA 2016**

Moderator- Bryan B Area 92 Corrections Chair

Bryan opened the meeting at 8:30 pm with the serenity prayer. He asked the room to suggest topics and we would then vote on which of them the group wanted to talk about. The following topics were suggested by the members:

1. How do we grow in effectiveness and understanding in corrections work? What works for other members in service? – Christine, Area 06
2. What is covered in corrections work and what is not? – Pete, Area 92
3. Bridging the gap- how it works with corrections. Matthew, Area 07
4. Corrections Correspondence – Area 09
5. Pre-release – Jennifer Area 05
6. How do corrections committees work or cooperate with facilities? – Area 42
7. What is the benefit of having a regional workshop? Amber, Area 58
8. Where is money collected for corrections best spent or distributed? Brian Area 42

A vote was taken on which of the topics we should discuss and which ones could be consolidated into one topic. It was decided that bridging the gap and pre-release could be combined and the group discussed that topic first.

### **Topic #1 Bridge and Pre-release**

Matthew L from Area 07 explained how the bridge the gap process works in his Area. They have a BTG chair that works with both treatment and corrections. There is a Bridge the Gap workshop in Tucson in September. Information about the workshop can be found at this website

Another member explained how the process works in Oregon. The inmates fill out a form that is sent to pre-release committee and they match them up with volunteers. They have a separate program for treatment.

Matt said that Southern Nevada H&I has their own BTG chair. The chair communicates with all of the wardens in the Area. He said that bridge volunteers are found through intergroup hotline volunteers and they treat the bridge like a 12 step call.

Jennifer talked about pre-release and asked the group if there are any facilities that don't allow bridge forms or literature to be taken in by volunteers. Members responded by saying that it varies depending on the institution. Some institutions do not allow AA's to take anything in, but will allow forms to be distributed through a prison official. In those institutions, they may allow literature in the prison library, but inmates are not allowed to take the books to their cells. Other Areas, including Area 92 and 72, said that all the institutions in WA allow forms and books to be taken in by AA members.

Jennifer also said that Southern CA doesn't have corrections committees at the district level. Instead, they have an H&I committee. She said when pre-release forms come in to the committee, they record and monitor the release dates and follow up with phone calls to volunteers to make sure the contact is made when the inmate is released.

Several people commented how critical it is that contact be made as soon as the inmate is released. An inmate is typically released to the area that they committed their crime, and sometimes the window for them to get to a meeting and stay sober is very small.

One of the members of the group talked about his own history of being incarcerated and said that sometimes when an inmate is released, they are just dropped off at a bus stop. Inmates are used to having a structured environment where all of their needs are met and when they get out, they sometimes don't handle the freedom very well.

The Spanish group from the Harbor Area talked about how H&I works in their Area and that the bridge program is working for them.

#### Topic #2 Program effectiveness and what works & Cooperation with Facilities

Christine talked about San Quentin and how the inmates started a 16 week sponsorship program in the prison.

A member talked about how the programs work in Washington State. Volunteers sponsors are responsible for the AA program in the meetings and can guide the group to do a Big Book study, or structure the time spent in meetings.

Roberto said that the statistics are that 83% of inmates can link alcoholism to their incarceration. He talked about how AA has to compete with faith based programs for meeting time and space. Not all prisons are AA friendly and we should use the Corrections Workbook to work with Administration. All of the tools you need are in the workbook and when you bring it with you to a meeting it looks professional. If they don't let you in at first, you should follow up later. Emphasize that inmates need to work the steps to stay sober.

Matt told of his experience when a facility changed staff and the new management asked AA to leave. They waited until the staff changed again to get a meeting back in the facility. They were persistent, but nice.

Bryan talked about how staff and roles change over time. He said he's been doing work in corrections for 25 years and has seen many changes over the years. He said you shouldn't be a dick head when trying to get a meeting inside, but sometimes you have to push back when you're told "no". It's not a question of whether it's right or wrong.

Roberto said we all face the same three problems, dealing with administration, lack of volunteers, and getting the inmate feel like they are a part of AA.



### Topic #3 Regional Corrections Workshop

Michael L from Area 42 said that local corrections workshops are one of the best attended workshops in his Area. He goes to different Districts and does a presentation on corrections.

Rick, Area 72- Said that PRAASA is a regional workshop of sorts.

Amber, Area 58 said that in Eugene they maintain a database of volunteers to e-mail people involved in corrections work. She asked how people get Grapevines into facilities. Several members said that they have no problems getting the magazine in. Some said that sometimes the subscription has to be in the name of the inside prison facilitator and not a particular inmate.

A member talked about how in his Area, people can get a 1 day pass to attend meetings “on the inside” of facilities. He said it is kind of like a workshop to see whether this kind of service is right for them.

Kevin from Area 58 said they do a lot of workshops in BTG. It’s good to bring speakers in that have been going to prisons for a long time and that love doing corrections work.

Matt talked about the benefits of the national BTG workshop. He said there is a document online at the BTG website that explains how to organize a committee. He said it answers many questions and offers a turnkey solution for starting up.

### Topic # 3 How is money best spent for Corrections work

The group discussed the pink can and how it should be distributed. Brian from Area 42 said that his district had collected money and they don’t have an institution to buy literature for. Another member from a District nearby said that their corrections committee did have a need for funding to by literature. They were happy to meet each other!

It was pointed out that pink can money collected should only go towards purchasing literature for jails and prisons and not used for anything else like purchasing literature for treatment centers. When the pink cans are passed around at meetings, people contributing are told that the money will be used to buy literature for jails and prisons and we need to stick to that.

### Topic # 4 Corrections Correspondence

Corrections correspondence was briefly discussed. Phil K from Area 72 said that last year about this time, the GSO said that there was a shortage of men on the outside to correspond with men on the inside. Since then, AA's on the outside have stepped up and there is no longer a shortage. In fact, there is a waiting list for people to be matched up with inmates. There is a need however for Spanish speaking men to correspond with Spanish speaking inmates.

The meeting closed at 10:15 pm with the Serenity Prayer.

In Service,

Phil K , Secretary