U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

National Institute for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

A Self-Help Fellowship
For Troubled Youth

Results of a Workshop

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CONCEPT PAPER:

A NATIONAL SELF-HELP FELLOWSHIP FOR TROUBLED YOUTH

This paper presents some initial concepts for a national Self-Help Fellowship for Troubled Youth. The ideas presented here were developed from a workshop held in New York City on June 11 and 12, 1985. Participants in the workshop were experts in the fields of social welfare, juvenile justice, substance abuse control, and self-help. (See Appendix B for list of participants.)

The workshop members discussed the major benefits of a national youth fellowship based on self-help principles, and the questions that need to be answered to bring such a fellowship into existence.

Some of the ideas developed in this workshop will be refined in a meeting to be held later this year. At that time, steps will be taken to establish the first local groups in a Self-Help Fellowship for Troubled Youth (which may or may not adopt that name, because the word "troubled" may stigmatize members). Their experiences will then be disseminated nationwide to organizations that might host these group meetings.

Workshop participants made presentations in four areas: 1) theories behind self-help fellowships and youth who get into trouble; 2) how a self-help fellowship network would support professional agencies, families, and eligible members; 3) structure and content of fellowship meetings; and 4) how to establish model, experimental fellowship groups and evaluate them.

THEORIES BEHIND SELF-HELP FELLOWSHIPS

Self-help fellowships have existed in organized form for many years, and in many contexts. The best known is Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), which has about a million members. Other groups related to AA are Al-Anon and Alateen, which focus self-help benefits on relatives and children of alcoholics and the many problems they experience because of a disruptive family life. Similar organizations assist numerous other groups with problems, such as drug abusers, child-abusing parents, and gamblers.

While each of these organizations has its own structure and activities, all have many similarities. The focus is on self-help; the group is not under the leadership of a professional therapist. Furthermore, the group is not meant to dictate rules for behavior of members. Instead, the emphasis is on mutual support toward a common goal--overcoming an identified problem--and on sharing the experiences of group members that have proven successful in reaching that common goal. The group is nonjudgmental, offering support to fellow members suffering from a common problem and encouragement to overcome this problem.

While the group meets regularly (from weekly to several times daily), its members are constantly available to each other in times of crisis. Thus, an alcoholic may call another AA member whenever he or she is tempted to take a drink, in order to receive encouragement to avoid drinking.

Another common aspect of self-help groups is the existence of a simple set of precepts by which the group operates. In Alcoholics Anonymous, this set of precepts is called "The Twelve Steps," which develop a philosophy for the alcoholic to follow daily on the road to recovery. In the case of AA, these precepts stress that members are "powerless over alcohol," and that they turned their lives over to "God as we understood Him" to find the strength to resist alcohol. While these steps heavily emphasize religious values, the concept has evolved so that today the precepts are not theological.

The precepts, which link all groups, and especially the precept that says members must continually be ready to "sponsor" and otherwise help other members, help distinguish the self-help fellowship from other self-help efforts.

In addition, self-help organizations often develop mottoes or phrases that embody the behavior that the group seeks to reinforce. These mottoes become guidelines for behavior, and provide a way for the new member to become oriented to the traditions of the group. The "spirituality" felt by members is important to sustaining the group and the members' support for each other. Traditions help the member switch from being a victim to someone who has the power to change his or her life.

Another important aspect of self-help groups is their availability throughout the Nation. A member who is away from home can call a local group anywhere in the country and will receive assistance similar to that in the home group. Of equal importance, as soon as a person joins, he or she feels part of a national movement.

On the other hand, self-help organizations stress the autonomy of the local group. Their national organizations provide general services, such as publications, advertisements, and organizational skills. The content of a group's meetings, and the directions taken in its discussions and activities, are decided at the discretion of group members. Each group has an organizational structure and names officers, but these officers have only an administrative function (rental of a meeting room, announcement of schedules, provision of refreshments, deciding on a specific meeting's discussion topic).

Membership in self-help fellowship groups is open; anyone who expresses a desire to overcome the problem, and attends the group's meetings, is a member. The preservation of the members' anonymity is also a critical component of the programs. The presumption is that anonymity frees members from reticence in discussing their problem and contributes to the freedom of the group from hierarchy or social distinction. (A group will keep a confidential file of members' names and addresses in order to maintain communications, but a person at a meeting usually uses only his or her first name.)

Groups strictly adhere to the notion that they offer members assistance and encouragement toward the mutually desired behavior and do not offer professional skills or services obtainable from other sources, such as therapy, employment counseling, education, or legal advice. In addition, the national organization does not make policy statements or exert political pressure of any sort. In a similar vein, these organizations do not seek funds from outside sources, choosing instead to operate on voluntary contributions by members (usually collected at each meeting by "passing the hat").

New members of self-help fellowship groups often have "sponsors"--more experienced members who have a special responsibility to teach the new member the traditions of the group, introduce other members, and act as an initial contact during crisis periods.

Self-help fellowship groups for youth, such as Alateen, usually have an adult monitor. The monitor is not a group leader, but is present to provide administrative assistance, answer questions that might be outside the experience of young people, and maintain order should the group be disrupted. However, the group itself can almost always deal with unsocial behavior from group members. (Alateen members are young persons experiencing a range of life problems, but all have one or more parents who are alcoholic.)

While self-help fellowship groups have been in existence for a long time, there is little research about what program components contribute to their effectiveness. AA is very successful among people who accept the kind of support and fellowship that the group provides. Alcoholics who are long-term AA members attest to the program's worth, although there may be some question about whether its value lies in its ability to institute behavioral changes related to members' alcohol consumption, or simply in its ability to provide fellowship.

While evaluative literature on self-help fellowship groups is sparse-- especially because members are anonymous--there is a large body of anecdotal evidence that the method is extremely successful among people who lack support and a sense of belonging to family, church, neighborhood, or similar groups.

Furthermore, there is a growing body of evidence indicating that troubled youth might particularly benefit from self-help groups. Several researchers have detected links between delinquent or self-destructive behavior in youths and a lack of "social bonding." Social bonding refers to the ability of the culture to transfer its moral and social customs to its youthful members. It is a complex of incentives, rewards, and activities that make the child feel that he or she is an integral part of the society and has significant contributions to make.

Without social bonding, the child will be more likely to respond to peers rather than parents or adults and to become involved in antisocial behaviors. A self-help fellowship offers a new "peer group" that can be relied on daily.

In many cultures, rituals and ceremonies indicate to a youth that he or she has become an adult member of the group. But in today's complex, heterogeneous society, it is much more difficult for a child to recognize his or her links to adult society.

This failure to achieve social bonding has several causes. There are obvious economic factors, as indicated by the fact that delinquency problems are more common among low-income youth. However, numerous studies have shown that youthful antisocial behavior is closely linked with youths who come from troubled families, and who suffer from other developmental problems, such as a failure to develop decisionmaking skills or to form friendships.

Self-help fellowship groups may be able to help substitute for these deficiencies. Adolescents naturally gather into groups; gangs, cliques, and other peer groups are universal adolescent groupings. They offer youths fellowship--and a system of values and rewards for approved behavior--which are

similar to those found in self-help groups. However, in gangs, the value system of the members is often at significant variance from society's norms.

The goal of a Self-Help Fellowship for Troubled Youth that could grow nationwide is to provide troubled youths with the opportunity to achieve social bonding through a fellowship of their peers.

The benefits and expected outcomes of the Fellowship are numerous. First, it would simply provide the friends that many youths lack--and thus an immediate sense of belonging. (This feeling is enhanced by becoming part of a national fellowship, in contrast to a local, community self-help effort.) The Fellowship would do so in a nonjudgmental, nonthreatening atmosphere permitting discussion of mutual problems.

The delinquent and self-destructive behavior exhibited by some youths is often linked to a vaguely expressed anxiety, discomfort, or alienation from their current condition. The self-help group could help troubled youths to explore these shared feelings, to understand their origins, or at least to show them that such feelings are common among young people. It provides "reality therapy": People who know the problems best share with new members what is likely to happen unless their behavior changes, the self-strength they have to make such changes, and the benefits of a new life.

The Fellowship would provide youths with the sense of belonging that is lacking from their families, schools, and neighborhoods. The national character of such a fellowship would further emphasize bonding to an institution that supports the standards and values of society. At the same time, the emphasis on the autonomy of each group would ensure that the activities of the self-help fellowship group would center on life problems specific to the local community, depending on its economic and social character. Local autonomy also would ensure that special problems of minority populations and other groups can be accommodated.

The "common bond" of the Fellowship would be the desire of members to end the unhappiness, confusion, and alienation they feel as a result of repeated antisocial behaviors. It would permit members to realize that change in their lives is possible and provide the network of friends and positive peer pressure that could assist them in overcoming their difficulties. This assistance would be in the form of encouragement from others to avoid negative behaviors, and a "resonance" from other members' experiences that would show the youth that his or her problems are not unique and that others have formulated patterns of behavior that successfully deal with the problems. In addition, the Fellowship precepts, mottoes, meetings, and sponsor support offer a 24-hour guide to a new life.

The development of socially acceptable standards and values among members would be one desired result of the Fellowship. But it would also provide youths with a mechanism for self-evaluation, by which they can compare the experiences and philosophies of their peers with their own.

MEMBERSHIP

While self-help groups have proven successful, primarily among segments of the adult population, there are obvious differences among youthful populations, raising the issue of eligibility for membership in a fellowship for troubled youth.

The most obvious question is why a delinquent or troubled youth would want to attend meetings of a fellowship that, at first glance, is opposed to his or her own values and furthermore implies that the youth has some sort of problem.

The problem of coerced membership (a referral from a court, school, or other authority) has been experienced by other self-help organizations. They have found that such coercion does not produce negative results. AA has a motto, "Bring the body and the mind will follow." This saying indicates that coerced members may come to meetings unwillingly at first, but as they feel more comfortable with the group's activities, and begin to experience the fellowship of the group, their unwillingness may change into enthusiastic acceptance.

This phenomenon stresses the importance of the "common bond" that self-help fellowship groups achieve. Examples of this can be seen at times when a nonalcoholic but abusive-drinking delinquent is assigned to an AA group. Despite the fact that such youths are not really alcoholics, they may often continue to attend group meetings to enjoy the fellowship.

On the other hand, the Fellowship must maintain a positive task orientation. It must not be stigmatized as a program for criminal offenders. For this reason, the "common bond" must be stated positively and in such a way as to preserve a sense of community in the group's goals.

This sense of community is an important aspect of the success of self-help fellowship groups. Other fellowships have a very specific behavioral problem (alcohol, drugs, gambling) that all members wish to overcome; while fellowships such as Alateen deal with many problems, their members are united by their common background (i.e., an alcoholic parent). Troubled youths have a variety of problems and a resulting variety of negative behaviors. A principal concern of the Fellowship will be to define the behaviors it means to oppose or favor, and to do so in such a way as to avoid stigma.

A critical aspect of this definition will be the desire for a change in the child's life. This may be stated in terms of "crisis," but it should be broader than a specific legal crisis, such as a conviction for a crime. The point of shared concern may be the feeling of anxiety or alienation that seems to be common among troubled youth.

Of course, youth itself may be considered a common bond. However, defining the issue too broadly would dilute the goal of the Fellowship. The membership qualification should stress the desire to intervene in a crisis in the child's life. Only in this way will members have the opportunity to meet with peers who have similar negative feelings and experiences.

The question of maintaining attendance, once a person has joined the group, may be moot. In other self-help groups, there seems to be a self-selection at work; the self-help concept seems more successful for certain personality types than for others. In this regard, it should be noted that the Fellowship would

not pretend to be a positive factor in the lives of all troubled youth.   In
AA, there is a large dropout rate among new attendees. AA probably reaches
10 percent of all alcoholics. Not all persons can give themselves over to a
group and its precepts and the need to help others. Among those who remain,
however, success rates seem to be relatively high. The Fellowship will operate
under the same premise. If even a small percentage of youths are helped by the
program, it may still be considered a success.

There should be some limits on membership, however. It is critical to
maintain a mix of voluntary and coerced members, to avoid the stigma mentioned
above. Severely retarded and psychotic youth might impinge on the ability of the
group to exercise the self-help concept. On the other hand, they might not
attend regularly and self-select themselves out, which is the way most
fellowships determine membership.

Within a particular local group, there should also be some age or
developmental criteria. The problems of a 20-year-old are different from those
of a 14-year-old; it is probably best to separate them.

There is also a question about whether there should be an upper age limit
for membership. This contrasts with other self-help fellowship groups, which
recognize that their members have a lifelong proclivity toward a problem; thus,
membership is presumed to be lifelong. However, in the Self-Help Fellowship for
Troubled Youth, an upper age limit may be necessary to retain the orientation
toward youth.

RELATIONSHIP TO AGENCIES, FAMILIES, AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The Fellowship will have a close relationship to professional service
agencies. This relationship exists because youths are more dependent than
adults, not only economically, but also in their life experiences and use of
support organizations. Thus, for example, an adult monitor might be present who
would be expected to direct members to other services in the community, if a
member's comments indicate that he or she is unaware of the availability of such
services. Monitors may also assist the group in increasing their understanding
of the adult world.

Professional help also will probably be involved in administrative aspects
of the Fellowship (such as providing meeting space, developing literature, and
publicity).

Members should remain anonymous, although groups can report attendance--
with a member's permission--to a school, court, or other institution (as other
self-help fellowships do). Youths may be more likely to know each other than
adults would, and anonymity must be stressed.

Because of the important role the meeting monitor might play, the Fellowship
may wish to try to develop a cadre of young adults who have shared some of the
life experiences of the members. The nearness in age of the monitor to the
members might help overcome hostility toward adult professionals, and increase
the likelihood that the monitor would be approached in a spirit of sharing and
trust. Members of Alateen might be recruited to be the original monitors.

The experience of other self-help fellowships has shown that professional social workers often see such programs as a threat to their own work, although such groups usually contribute to an increase in work for professionals. Nevertheless, agencies must adopt a new attitude toward the Fellowship. While important to the development of the Fellowship, monitors should exercise care and be professionally self-conscious about their level of activity with the group. They should be careful not to intervene too actively in the process. This will often require sensitivity--from making referrals to deciding how to provide professional counseling while a client is also attending Fellowship meetings.

Agencies must also overcome certain bureaucratic attitudes toward the program. One is the "time-frame" mentality, which expects or demands certain outcomes in a measurable period of time. Another is the "assessment" philosophy, which requires that all programs undergo rigorous evaluations. The kinds of progress expected from the Fellowship may be less evaluable than in other programs. Furthermore, one of its principal expected outcomes--human fellowship for youths who would otherwise not have it--may not be measurable in any way other than youths' continued participation. This does not mean, however, that such outcomes as criminal offenses and school attendance, along with attendance at meetings, cannot be measured at all.

Proper explanation of the Fellowship's role to the public is important so that it is not viewed incorrectly as usurping the role of the family as well as of organized groups responsible for children's development. There are also several concerns about the political implications of the self-help concept. What, for example, would prevent the Fellowship from developing as a political force, or adopting self-serving goals? What would prevent a single group from developing into a gang, and adopting antisocial, rather than socially acceptable, behaviors? How would the Fellowship prevent local groups from developing racist, elitist, or similar undesirable philosophies?

These questions have already been confronted and resolved by most other self-help fellowships. They specifically abjure any political or social program; they refuse to take any type of public policy positions. Membership is anonymous. Also, officers exist only to carry out meetings, and do not have "power." Furthermore, the desire of group members to remedy their own personal problems is usually uppermost in members' minds. Similarly, self-help fellowships have found that social distinctions within groups do not cause dissent. Class, educational, and income differences are of secondary importance to the members, who seek assistance only in defeating the negative behavior that is destroying their lives.

The Fellowship does raise the question of its role "in loco parentis." The self-help group is another "family" rather than an organization that usurps the traditional role of the natural family or other social organizations (assuming that such institutions adequately provide for the youth's needs for fellowship and self-esteem). The need for all types of fellowship will continue until other institutions recover their ability to effectively address these needs. Nevertheless, the Self-Help Fellowship for Troubled Youth must publicly stress its commitment to the ideals of traditional social organizations.

STRUCTURE OF MEETINGS

The theory behind a Self-Help Fellowship for Troubled Youth has been comprehensively presented through the experiences of other self-help fellowships. However, the actual process by which this Fellowship can develop presents new and special problems. Other self-help groups began as local organizations, and spread as their success and popularity increased. Similarly, to begin a fellowship for troubled youth, it will be necessary to start at the local level, with a national purpose and precepts in mind that can unite groups in the future. Furthermore, the special problems of beginning such an organization for troubled youth--who are more dependent and less self-directed than adults--have largely been unexamined, and thus require a local, evaluative initial effort.

One of the first questions for the Fellowship is: Where can meetings be held? The possibilities range from a permanent "club," which is constantly open, to rental of a meeting room in a school, church, or other public or private facility. This question will be answered to a great extent by the funds that will be eventually available to the Fellowship, through member contributions and perhaps some startup funding. A permanent meeting area or club may be desirable, since it would provide a place for assistance whenever the need for support arises. Such a program is initially outside the Fellowship's capabilities.

An accessible and secure environment should be made available to provide the necessary privacy in which the self-help group can meet. The space should not be isolated or segregated from other activities taking place within the environment. At the same time, it must not be stigmatized as a place for delinquents, psychotics, or other abnormal groups. Churches, youth-serving agencies, or similar institutions may be particularly suitable for group meetings, if they are respected by youths in the community, easily accessible, and understanding of the purposes of the Fellowship. "Passing the hat," which provides meeting costs for other fellowships, may not prove feasible for a fellowship for troubled youth.

The frequency of meetings could also vary widely. At a minimum, the group should meet weekly, with the understanding that, as in AA, Fellowship members can contact each other whenever they feel the need for support. The critical factor regarding frequency is that the service must be available when the need for it arises. If meetings are only weekly, a youth may wish to attend different groups (as happens in other fellowships). A greater frequency of meetings, however, is desired. (Sponsors can be contacted at any time.)

The content of meetings should vary according to the needs and interests of the individual group. In other self-help fellowships, meetings may be devoted to speakers on a subject of interest to the group, or may consist of discussions by members of how they deal with some aspect of their problem. Much time is also spent describing the fellowship's traditions and principles.

As has already been mentioned, the meeting monitors will be of critical importance in the success of the Fellowship. Training of monitors must stress the need to preserve the self-help character of the group. Monitors should aim at setting up the group, then stepping back to let the self-help principle work. The role of the nonintrusive adult at Alateen meetings may provide a model to follow.

The delicate nature of the self-help concept requires very sensitive monitors, particularly during the period when a group is being established. During this time, the group does not yet understand the need for mutual encouragement and the avoidance of criticism. Other self-help groups have a core of members who have experienced the self-help concept for many years, and who can orient new members. In the Fellowship, however, all members will initially be inexperienced. For this reason, the Fellowship should place heavy emphasis on recruiting members of other self-help fellowships and using them to "colonize" the Fellowship's meetings.

The actual proceedings of group meetings will be determined by the group itself. While the fact that youths will be making these determinations might be disconcerting to some, the capacity of young people for self-reflection should not be underestimated.

It might be advisable for members to be assigned sponsors, as is the case with other self-help fellowships. Since youth are involved, this should be decided with care; various models might be applicable. Because of the importance of peer pressure among youth, the ability of the Fellowship to provide pressure toward socially acceptable behavior will be critical.

Another critical aspect of an individual group's activities will be the members' ability to share life experiences. This will expose them to successful strategies for dealing with the problems that led them to socially unacceptable behavior. This type of networking is a critical aspect of any self-help fellowship, but is particularly important for youths who may be unsure of basic modes of acceptable behavior. Youths have different senses of time, urgency, and socially acceptable behavior than adults, and the group will give them the opportunity for mutual searching and understanding of the adult world.

The Fellowship must also develop methods by which children can be drawn into the program after they leave an institutional environment, as well as obtain referrals from schools and courts both before and after adjudication.

The needs of minority and special populations must be specifically addressed. While the Fellowship emphasis on local-group autonomy will accommodate minority youths' special problems, the Fellowship must be able to recruit and sustain groups among populations that have less experience with the self-help concept.

Finally, the Fellowship must take into account the differing needs of younger and older youths. The possibility of developing subgroups based on age has already been mentioned. A degree of flexibility must be retained here, however, because older members can provide young and new members with important information about group activities, as well as giving the younger members the benefit of their own experiences with the problems of growing up.

ESTABLISHMENT AND EVALUATION OF EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS

Specific methods for starting the first Fellowship groups will be defined at the organizational meeting in the Fall. There are two potential methods by which the Fellowship can be established. One is through funding and evaluating a small number of pilot or model groups. On the basis of these evaluations,

successful practices can be identified, training and organization can be formalized, and the Fellowship can build on the results of the pilot groups.

This method takes time. It also would be limited to the extent that every pilot group will draw from a unique population of youths from particular geographic, ethnic, and economic circumstances. A few model programs might not adequately address the large number of problems that will be confronted when the Fellowship is implemented on a national basis.

The other alternative is to develop a set of general guidelines and precepts for the self-help program, allowing for the large number of individual differences that will appear in each community. In this case, heavy dependence would be placed on the literature and experience of other self-help organizations. Funding would be required for a general services backup group to develop guidelines, program models, and promotional methods.

While this method would increase the speed by which the Fellowship can be implemented on a national basis, it suffers from the prospect of loose control over the program, and potential political problems caused by widely varying interpretations of the program model. In addition, this method disregards to some extent the obvious need for evolution in the development of the Fellowship. Finally, it would be based on a model that is untested.

A possible solution might be to use the Fall meeting to discuss and develop general traditions that would be acceptable to groups from the widest socioeconomic range, then test these on a limited basis.

In either case, the issue of funding is critical to the establishment of a fellowship. Seed or experimental moneys for funding are both legitimate and necessary to establish various models applicable to youth-serving programs. It may also be possible to recruit already existing child welfare and service organizations to sponsor the first groups.

Not only initial funding, but also the sources for financing the Fellowship's continuing operations must be carefully considered. Since youths do not have the financial resources to sustain the Fellowship in the same way that other self-help groups are sustained, an outside, ongoing funding mechanism must be developed, at least initially. This may further necessitate "low-budget" and "high-budget" program models for communities that provide scant or generous funding for the Fellowship's activities.

In any case, the Fellowship will need a general services backup group to provide training and technical assistance, literature, and public promotion and education.

Evaluation of the program may vary between two widely differing indicators. On the one hand, the measure of specific behavioral changes in members (i.e., changes in incidents involving the justice system) would indicate the program's success in inculcating socially approved behaviors. However, this would not measure the extent to which the Fellowship provides members with companionship and self-help. In this case, continuing attendance by members would be a good indicator of success.

In either case, the Fellowship should stress that any evaluation must retain the members' right to anonymity.

NEXT STEPS

Many issues remain to be examined in the establishment of a National Self-Help Fellowship for Troubled Youth. To review the specific program model and the generic framework, an organizational meeting is planned for the Fall. The meeting will issue invitations describing the self-help concept, and inviting appropriate groups to attend. Further work will be done in gathering completed research in the field of self-help. The meeting will focus on issues discussed in this paper.

Task forces at the meeting may address the following issues, among others: 1) definition of the concept of self-help as employed by the Fellowship; 2) funding; 3) specification of the "common goal" that will provide the basis of fellowship; 4) guidelines and uniting precepts for development of local groups; 5) role of the general services backup group; 6) relationship with existing self-help fellowships; 7) relationships with the justice system, social service organizations, and other interested groups; 8) development of program models; and 9) approaches to evaluation.

APPENDIX A

DISCUSSION POINTS RAISED AT THE JUNE 11-12, 1985, WORKSHOP OF A
NATIONAL SELF-HELP FELLOWSHIP FOR TROUBLED YOUTH

THEORIES

1. Look within self for solution.

2. Self-help: No "professional" runs group.

3. Set of standards and values that are socially acceptable and link groups.

4. Individual's action, not thoughts.

5. Self-motivation.

6. Importance of AA's and Alateen's 12 Steps.

7. No longer hurting.

8. Awareness of discomfort among members.

9. Begin with capacity to be reflective.

10. Fellowship aims to stop hurt, alienation.

11. Recognition that change is possible (cause or effect?).

12. Non-judgmental.

13. Norms which don't harm self, group, or others.

14. No preconditions.

15. Desire to stop misbehavior.

16. Desire to achieve.

17. Desire for change of current condition.

18. Resonance caused by others' experiences.

19. Common Bond.

20. Suggestions, not rules.

21. Mechanism for self-evaluation.

22. Structure from other members.

23. Norms evolve from group.

24. Importance of concepts through words and phrases.

25. "Bring the body and the mind will follow."

26. "Tools, not rules."

27. People create the service through each other.

28. Dependence of youth.

MEMBERS

1. Limit to legal offenders.

2. Positive task orientation.

3. Avoid stigma or area of commonality.

4. Do legal offenders see selves as having a problem?

5. What is the bond?

6. Youth as bond?

7. Exclude anyone?   Severely retarded?

8. Diversity of problems, but sharing of anxiety.

9. Must be clear about purpose.

10. Youth who desire change.

11. What keeps people in groups?

12. Self-selection.

13. Need peers with same experiences to listen, empathize.

14. Crisis in child's life.

15. Should be an age limit.

16. Voluntary referral.

17. Coercion not a negative-outcome factor.

18. Mix of voluntary and coerced.

19. Broader applications than legal crisis.

20. Membership through a variety of routes.

21. Developmental criteria.

22. Confidentiality issues.

23. Focus on self-help issue.

24. "Pluralistic".

AGENCIES/FAMILIES

1. Should not be seen as threat.

2. Overcome "time-frame" philosophy.

3. Improper training of professionals.

4. Overcome "assessment" mentality.

5. "In loco parentis."

6. Professional or adult monitor should have same experiences as members.

STRUCTURE

1. Hostility of youth to adult professionals.

2. Sharing and trust in professionals necessary.

3. Leader must overcome tendency to control group.

4. Need for presence of young adult with life experience.

5. How to establish fellowship?

6. "Colonize."

7. Use other self-help groups to start.

8. Structure around "juvenile delinquency."

9. Don't underestimate capacity for self-reflection.

10. Must meet often enough to be available for need.

11. Sponsors.

12. Sponsor should be youth.

13. Where?

14. Community-based, not stigmatized.

15. Churches, fire departments, etc.

16. "Buddy system."

17. Should be many models.

18. Delinquency not a highly specific target.

19. Self-help group as one tool to prevent misbehavior.

20. Need to break prior associations.

21. Peer pressure strong in youth.

22. Structure to transfer from institution to home.

23. Need for place to <u>always</u> go to.

24. Need for a <u>safe</u> place.

25. How to train group leaders, select sponsors, etc.

26. Purpose of meeting to give youth experiences?

27. Professionals should try to set up group, then step back.

28. Presence of professionals hurts self-help concept.

29. Self-help provides networking.

30. Dependence of youth opposed to self-help.

31. Self-help doesn't mean complete divorce from other services.

32. Youths have different senses of time, urgency, etc.

33. Flexibility in age limits.

34. Subgroups by age.

NATIONAL

1. Broad-based open meetings to spread self-help model.

2. Need for research on what is happening in the field.

3. Need for initial funding to develop idea.

4.   Initial criteria for September invitees.

5.   September attendance governed by convener, attendees.

6.   Open attendance, but clear criteria.

7.   General guidelines, allowing for individual differences.

8.   Use existing literature for guidelines.

9.   Differing populations.

10.   No current program model.

11.   Next meeting to deepen concept.

12.   Minority needs.

13.   Fellowship concept can include special-needs populations.

14.   Need to explicitly address special populations.

15.   Need to clarify concept.

16.   Potential political problems.

17.   Focus on methodology and process.

18.   "Each group is autonomous," but steps and traditions are shared.

19.   Need for central Technical Assistance agency to start.

20.   Literature, TA, PR, etc.

21.   Ongoing source of traditions.

22.   OJJDP support?

23.   "Seed money."

24.   Need for "degree of evolution."

25.   Flexibility in costs.

26.   Look for specific behavioral changes.

27.   Research design must retain anonymity.

28.   Client response best indicator?

29.   Public education.

WORKSHOP ON A NATIONAL SELF-HELP FELLOWSHIP FOR TROUBLED YOUTH

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