

Berkshire Institutions Committee Meeting on 4/18/18

The committee convened on Weds, 4/18 at Berkshire Intergroup with 7 present.

Chairperson opened meeting with Serenity Prayer and a reminder that Institutions is now the primary avenue of entry into AA for new members. With privacy concerns of modern day, we depend upon these in-facility meetings to do our twelfth step work and ensure that AA will be here for our great great grandchildren.

The committee welcomed Jaryn P from Central Berkshire Group. Other Groups represented were MEn's Thurs Nite GB Group, Ray of Hope group, former Chair Bill P, Watch your step group, and Berkshire Intergroup Committee. It was a lively meeting with a presentation by Don W about Berkshire County House of Correction. He has been serving with one of three groups bringing in 2 meetings to inmates each Weds pm. CORI and literature procedures, as well as guidelines were explained. Two of those three Wednesday night groups are Men's meetings, but there is one co-ed meeting hosting a weds night and there are three other meeting sponsors bringing meetings into the prison on Monday or Tuesday nights to other pods and bound overs.

The Committee has been given the OK by BCHC to begin to CORI female speakers who may speak at these meetings so long as they enter with a male meeting sponsor who has been regularly serving there.

It has also been decided that the committee will offer CORI forms to anyone currently on the SPEAKER BUREAU (FILL IN) list. This way we can offer the list to those serving so tirelessly at the house of corrections, to expand their pool of speakers for their meetings. Anyone interested may contact Chaula to complete a CORI form. Please spread the word to BCHC meeting sponsors who may not be attending committee meetings.

Cooperation with the Professional Community is scheduled to bring a CPC presentation to the BCHC staff on April 26th.

Area 31 Accessibility Committee:

Committee Chair met up with Area 31 Accessibility chair Moira E at both the Area Assembly mini-conference and the district 3 meeting, in Lee, where Moira presented on Friday night. Some local accessibility needs are listed below....i.e. meetings requested at Timberlyn Heights TBI skilled nursing facility. Those willing to be on a list to drive those with injuries or illness to meetings or to temporarily bring a meeting in to someone who cannot leave their home. If you would like to be placed on this list, contact chaula and she will forward your contact info to the appropriate person. Foreign or ASL language speakers are encouraged to sign up to carry the message to non-English speakers or those for whom ASL is primary language.

Accessibility Survey: Some time ago, the Accessibility committee put out a survey to local groups, through Berkshire Intergroup, to assess the handicap accessibility of our local meetings; However, the questionnaire may have been misunderstood by some members. Some meetings are still listed as handicap accessible, but have no handicap rest room available. Some have no handicap designation whatsoever. Chaula H now has copies of this questionnaire. If your group would like one, contact Chaula and she will mail one to you to complete at your next business meeting.

We have had a number of missed meetings at CSS, BMC. THREE Friday night commitments have opened up and are available to be sponsored by groups or individuals.

Committee Chair also presented on Friday night at district 3 and the issue of sobriety time requirements for positions of service on the committee was discussed. To remind members, the requirement for speaking at an institutions meeting is 6 months. To Chair an institutions meeting, the requirement is 1 year and to have some previous experience speaking at institutions meeting with a more experienced chair. There has been recent initiative to involve those with less than 6 months and more than 90 days to go out with a an experienced meeting SPONSOR, meaning the person who holds and books the commitment, and his or her speaker to an institutions meeting, strictly to observe. The observer is not to verbally engage with patients, staff, or inmates, and should allow the meeting sponsor to set the tone for the commitment. A younger member encountered at the district 3 meeting stated that he had a negative experience at an AA institutions meeting at the McGee unit over length of time of sobriety. This writer is reaching out to the McGee unit to discuss this more fully and make sure we are all on the same page. In the meantime, lets use common sense. The people filling these commitments should be solid AA members who have sponsors, have worked or are working their steps, and are being properly mentored to do this important service. We have to remember what hat we are wearing when we go on commitments. We don't socialize with the patients, before and after meetings, except to point out something in the literature that might be helpful, to give a member a meeting list or a BRIDGING THE GAP contact, or address a question. Speakers or observers are always to defer to the more experienced meeting sponsor before interacting with inmates and patients or speaking out of turn at an institutions meeting. We are entering the domain of professional staff and any unprofessional behavior, such as excessive use of foul language, telling war stories, or being too familiar with a patient or inmate can reflect badly on AA as a whole. Remember that, "we tell our stories in a general way" and we respect the 4th tradition which states that.... "Each Group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole."

Berkshire Institutions Committee meets every third Wednesday at 7:00 pm at Berkshire Intergroup Office. Our next meeting is on Weds, May 16 at 152 North Street (above Pancho's Restaurant), take elevator to 3rd Floor Suite 30C

Some of our members meet early, at 5:30 downstairs at Pancho's for fellowship before the committee meeting. Please join us. All welcome!

Current Open Commitments:

Jones II Unit BMC:
1st, 2nd, 3rd, & 5th Saturdays 11 am
3rd & 4th Sunday at 10 am

CSS Clinical Stabilization Services, BMC
1st, 3rd, & 5th Friday at 7 pm

McGee Detox Unit BMC: 5th Saturday, 7pm

Timberlyn Height, Great Barrington, sponsor's choice

Other Institutions Committee Needs:

Special Needs / Accessibilities: Drivers to take shut ins or patients to meetings or to bring meetings in

to someone who is temporarily unable to leave their home. Translators.

Donations: Group monetary donations to Area 31 Institutions Committee pays for literature but we also accept donations of gently used Grapevines, books, or pamphlet literature.

Monetary donations may be sent to Western Mass Institutions, PO Box 1391, Holyoke, MA 01041

Bridging the Gap contacts to assist prisoners and patients getting to meetings on the days of or immediately following release or discharge from facility.

Facility Liaisons to meet with staff at various sites, re-supply literature, etc...

Institutions Group Reps to act as go between committee and home group and to make sure our commitments are running smoothly or that any problems are reported to the committee.

SPEAKERS BUREAU:

Members willing to cover commitments on a temporary or last-minute basis. Now seeking members willing to be CORI checked for prison speaking commitments.

Questions or concerns? Please contact Chaula.berkshireinstitutionscommittee@gmail.com

If you would like to be put on our mailing list, or removed, please respond to this email with either **SUBSCRIBE** or **UNSUBSCRIBE** in the subject line.