

בס"ד

TRAINING MANUAL

VOLUME ONE

*For those visiting Jewish men and women
incarcerated - In prison*

An Aleph Institute Publication

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Some of the material in these manuals were adopted, with kind permission, from the PF training manuals.

ALEPH INSTITUTE VOLUNTEER TRAINING

VOLUNTEER'S MANUAL

OPENING THE DOOR

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WELCOME TO AN EXCITING EXPERIENCE

Welcome to Volunteer Training Part 1! You're about to open the door to an adventure that may be one of the most exciting and rewarding in your entire life. That's what many prison volunteers have learned from their own experience.

This training is the first of four training parts designed to equip volunteers in assisting prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families.

Volunteer Training Part 1 is an opportunity for you to spend some time with prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families. It can be an experiment for you to see if you are comfortable with prisoner assistance. It's an opportunity to see if you want to continue training to become a committed volunteer.

This may be your first time to go into a prison or meet prisoners, ex-prisoners, or their families. If so, you probably have fears and many questions. Most people do. You may wonder what prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families are like. How do they feel about people like you getting involved with them? How should you act? Will they accept you? Will you accept them? What do you do and say? How should you act? Is it safe?

To help you overcome these fears, we'll try to answer questions you may have, and we'll give you some guidelines. Try to have an open mind and be willing to put aside preconceived ideas.

Remember we are dealing with individuals like you and I, who have made mistakes in life, as King David says in Tehillim, "Yitamu Chatoem min Hoeretz" may the sins be wiped away, the sins and not the sinners. Everyone has makes mistakes, we all ask every year on Yom Kippur for our mistakes to be wiped away, and for the most part they are.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM PRISONERS AND EX-PRISONERS

You probably wonder what to expect from prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families. Most are happy and grateful to have you involved with them, and they're usually delighted to have visitors.

*“the Lubavitcher
Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem M.
Schneerson, of sainted
memory, in 1981. The
Rebbe who's concern
included all Jewish men
and women, would
repeatedly request,
especially during
holidays, that the
Jewish inmates should
be included during the
holiday preparations.”*

You'll find that they're just people....like you in many ways. They've laughed and cried, like you. They want to love and be loved, as you do. They're people who need a friend - someone like you.

They find themselves surrounded by a vast majority of men who are not Jewish, by a staff who have had very little contact with Jews, and are subject often to anti semitism. You, the Rabbi or volunteer are the only one, who can listen to them, and console them, and who will not repeat the conversation. It will remain private.

It is imperative to note and remember at all times, whether you are a Rabbi or not, these conversations you have with the inmate are protected, as you are entering the institution is under religious pretense, and therefore protected by the Rabbi congregant confidentiality laws. Never discuss with ANYONE any part of your discussion with the inmate, if you have a question you may discuss it with your superior at Aleph, who will be able to better direct you.

The above statement however, does not apply, if the inmate talks about harming him or herself, or harming someone else (another inmate or staff member), under those circumstances, and only those circumstances, may you and you should inform the chaplain in the institution, or the lieutenant. But with the minimum information necessary for the safety of the inmate or staff members.

The Aleph Institute

The Aleph Institute, was founded by Rabbi Sholom Lipskar at the direction of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of sainted memory, in 1981. The Rebbe who's concern included all Jewish men and women, would repeatedly request, especially during holidays, that the Jewish inmates should be included during the holiday preparations.

In 1991 Aleph Institute, opened its North East regional office, to care for the ever increasing number of Jewish inmates.

Currently Aleph offers programs to four groups.

- 1) inmates, a) inmate in the City/County Jails, b) state prisons and d) Federal prisons
- 2) Families of inmates, a)Spouses b) Children and c) Parent/Siblings
- 3) Ex-inmates, rehabilitation programs for inmates getting out of prison, housing, job placement, counseling and Rabbinical counseling.

It is important for you as a volunteer to be familiar with the many programs Aleph offers, we therefore request you become familiar with our website at www.AlephNE.org or pick up one of our programs brochures.

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SOME HELPFUL INFORMATION

RULES ARE IMPORTANT

It is absolutely necessary that prison volunteers follow all the rules of a prison and those of Aleph Institute. At first, you may not understand these rules. Some may seem pointless or even dumb, but they are made for good reasons. So, please, follow them carefully. They are for your good and the good of prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families.

Prison officials deeply appreciate cooperative programs that have good rules and require their volunteers to follow them. For Aleph Institute to prosper and grow, we must have the good will of prison officials. As you follow the rules and show your respect for them, you are a good model for prisoners.

Sometimes prisoners test volunteers to see if they will disobey rules. Some prisoners think that everyone is dishonest. Even if they act upset, they'll be glad to know there are people who practice what they preach. They are looking and longing for someone to respect and trust.

DO'S AND DON'TS

***DON'T GIVE OUT YOUR ADDRESS OF PHONE NUMBER**

If asked, you might say, "I'm sorry, but we were told it was against the rules to do that." You might explain kindly that you must obey the rules, as they must, and you might explain that you don't want to do anything that could prevent Aleph Institute from helping prisoners. You may however give the Aleph office address and phone number to the inmates.

*** DON'T MAKE PROMISES THAT YOU CAN'T KEEP**

Don't say that you'll come back or help a person unless you know for sure you will. Don't say that you'll do things for prisoners until you know the rules. Most prisoners have had a great number of disappointments and hurts in life. Don't be another one for them. They can accept "no" much better than a "yes" or "maybe" that never happens.

*** DON'T GO INTO A PRISON IF YOU ARE YOUNGER THAN THE REQUIRED AGE** Many prisons do not admit anyone under age 18.

*** DON'T ASK WHY A PERSON IS OR HAS BEEN IN PRISON**

Would you want someone to ask you?

*** DON'T TAKE ANYTHING IN OR OUT OF PRISON WITHOUT APPROVAL**

Aleph Institute will approve everything you take into prison. This means a letter or a piece of gum. Many things that are okay on the outside are not okay in a prison. Chewing gum, which is harmless on the street, might clog locks inside a prison.

Don't take anything from a prisoner unless it is cleared with Aleph Institute. This means anything, not even a letter, photo, or a poem. Sometimes prisoners will test you to see if you will break rules. This may be a way for them to see if you are "for real.."

*** DON'T CRITICIZE STAFF, AN INSTITUTION, OTHER RACES, COUNTRIES, OR RELIGIONS**

Try to steer conversations into something positive and helpful.

*** DON'T ENTER ANY BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS WITH PRISONERS**

For example, a prisoner might ask you to sell his or her artwork on the outside.

*** DON'T FORGET TO BRING IN A VALID, CURRENT PHOTO ID, IF REQUIRED**

Volunteers have been turned away from a prison because their identification was a driver's license that was invalid or had an address that was not current.

*** DON'T FORGET TO CHECK THE RULES IF YOU ARE AN EX-PRISONER GOING INTO PRISON**

Some prisons have rules about ex-prisoners coming into a prison. If you're on probation, it might be against rules for you to associate with prisoners.

*** DON'T RUN ON PRISON GROUNDS**

Sometimes volunteers will run to their cars because it's cold, they're in a hurry, or just from excitement, Running could startle an officer in a prison tower.

***DO DRESS PROPERLY**

Check to see if there are local dress codes or suggestions. Don't wear anything sexually suggestive. Don't wear tight or revealing clothing. Remember, what may be all right outside may not in a prison. Check yourself carefully in a mirror before you leave home. Don't wear too much make-up, jewelry, or perfume.

*** DO BE CAREFUL OF CON GAMES**

When you find that prisoners and ex-prisoners are friendly, kind, and fun to be with, you'll probably forget that they're prisoners or ex-prisoners. That's great. But don't forget: Some of them have spent their lives either conning (deceiving) people or being conned (having others deceive them).

*** DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING THAT A PRISONER OF EX-PRISONER TELLS YOU**

Some of them may work on your sympathy or guilt feelings to get what they want. You usually won't help a person change for the better by becoming another victim. As long as a person can use you, you will have trouble gaining his or her respect. They may tell you some very convincing stories, especially when trying to get money from you. Again, don't make any promises or get involved with a prisoner or ex-prisoner without advice and help.

*** DO BE TRUSTWORTHY WHEN SOMEONE SHARES WITH YOU PERSONAL OR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

Be careful about repeating what someone has told you.

However, if you're told something that could endanger a person's life or an institution, talk to appropriate parties about it, such as your Aleph Institute director, volunteer leader, or Rabbi.

Don't encourage inmates to confess illegal activities. If a person confesses a crime to you, you might be called to testify against the confessor in a criminal trial, if this issue arises, please discuss all with your Aleph Director, volunteer leader or Rabbi.

*** DO BE CAREFUL ABOUT PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Some institutions forbid hugging. If hugging is permitted, try to ensure that it's done in a nonsexual way. A warm handshake usually is appreciated and appropriate.

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*** DO BE PREPARED TO HANDLE FLIRTING OR ROMANTIC ADVANCES**

If you handle this issue firmly but kindly, you'll probably prevent a problem. You might simply say, "That's not why I'm here," then change the subject.

Suppose a man says to a woman volunteer, "My, you have pretty legs." She might say, "Thank you. They work well. That's the important thing about legs, isn't it? Now, would you tell me something about the programs offered to you here?" Or you might think about other questions to ask, such as "How did you learn about Aleph Institute?" Or, "Tell me what a day in prison is like." Or, "Would you like to tell me what plans you have for your life?"

It is important that people learn to relate to the opposite sex in nonsexual ways. Female volunteers can be a great help in teaching this.

*** DO BE A GOOD LISTENER**

Prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families need someone who will listen to them. They need someone who cares what they think and feel. By listening, you can learn what needs they have and what questions they have. Many people have never had someone care enough about them to really listen to them. Be that someone!

Try to draw out the shy person or the one who may seem angry and withdrawn. Usually these are the people most in need of love-your love. You might try asking non-threatening questions, or tell them something about yourself or the program. You might discuss sports, cars, or hobbies. Try to find an area of interest.

It's usually best not to show shock at anything that's said. You don't have to agree with what is being said, but you can be accepting of the person.

*** DO TRY TO FIND WAYS TO ENCOURAGE AND GIVE HOPE**

Try to build self-esteem, which is usually extremely low among prisoners and ex-prisoners.

*** DO STAY WITH YOUR GROUP**

Don't linger when you're been told it's time to leave.. Again, we want to cooperate fully with the prison officials.

*** DO BE VERY KIND AND COURTEOUS TO EVERYONE**

Smiles are nice, if they're real. Be a good-will ambassador for Aleph Institute. Whenever possible, thank the prison officials for their help and for allowing you to go into prison. Thank the prisoners for their help.

*** DO BE NATURAL. BE YOURSELF**

Don't try to talk differently or use prisoners or ex-prisoners slang. It won't sound real. There are cultural differences, but they should not prevent us from being ourselves. Don't worry about relating to another culture. If you're just yourself, you'll find great acceptance.

Don't pretend to understand if you don't. You don't have to understand to be understanding. If you're asked a question you don't understand, give that great answer. "I don't know." Prisoners and ex-prisoners are very perceptive people who can usually spot a phony right away. They know if you're "for real" and if you're genuinely caring. The real you is a great gift you can offer prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families. As they receive that gift, they will benefit from it.

*** WHAT NAMES TO USE FOR PRISON PEOPLE**

People behind bars are called inmates, offenders, felons, residents, and prisoners. Today, many institutions call prisoners residents. Usually that is the best term to use when you need to refer to a group of prisoners. However, try to learn prisoners' names and address them by name. Calling a prisoner or former prisoner or a felon or ex-felon or offender or ex-offender is presuming a judgment. Not all prisoners or ex-prisoners are guilty of committing a crime. The head of the prison is usually called the superintendent or warden. Those who work inside are usually called officers, not guards. If you know their rank, refer to them as Lieutenant, Captain, Sergeant, or etc.

Because terms do vary around the country, you may want to ask the director or chaplain which terms are preferred in your area.

ONE TO ONE TRAINING

If you are taking this training with just one other person, both of you can do this activity.

ACTIVITY

WHO ARE YOU?

Here's an activity that will:

help you get acquainted with another person or group

help you see how people often judge wrongly

show what you can learn about someone by carefully listening and paying attention

1. Take a few minutes and write down four things about yourself. Make one of these things untrue, but as believable as possible. Some things you might include are facts about your family, something about your work or hobbies, some events from your childhood, some plans for the future.

Share things that help people get to know you better. If you're with people who know you, share things they don't know.

Examples are:

I was captain of my high school basketball team.

My worst subject in school was math.

I recently lost 20 pounds.

I love to fish and go camping.

2. After everyone has made a list, one person should read his or her list. Then each person in the group should take a turn guessing which statement is false and why he or she thinks it is false.
3. Give everyone a chance to read his or her list and allow the group to respond to each person, as in number 2.

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

1. What did you learn from this activity?
2. Were there any surprises? If so, explain.
3. What did you listen for in this activity?
4. What did you observe about the people in your group?
5. What did this activity teach you about judging prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families?
6. Did this activity teach you anything about listening to and observing prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families?
7. What errors did you make that might apply to your contacts with prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families?

LOOK, LISTEN, LEARN

As you go into prison or meet prisoners, ex-prisoners, or their families, observe everything and everyone carefully. Learn as much as you can.

Look for feelings and attitudes among prisoners, prison officials, and volunteers. Look for the effects of prison on everyone. Try to read from people's faces and body language what is going on inside them, and listen carefully to everything that is said. Then, after the experience, you can share these things with the others in your group.

3. AFTER THE PRISON-RELATED EVENT

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

After you have had personal contact with a prisoner, ex-prisoner, or prisoner's family, answer the following questions.

1. Has your attitude toward prisoners, ex-prisoners, or their families changed since you began this training? If so, explain.

2. Was this experience what you expected? Why or why not?

3. What did you observe during this experience?

4. Did you see anger? Explain

5. Did you see hurt? Explain.

6. What else did you see?

7. Share any feelings or thoughts about this experience.

8. What questions do you have?

4 TRAINING OVERVIEW

TRAINING GOALS

This chapter describes Aleph Institute's volunteer training, which may lead to volunteer certification.

Aleph volunteer training is not designed to teach or to increase the Torah observance of its volunteers. We are not trying to duplicate the job of a synagogue or be a synagogue. You won't find detailed training in how to read the Torah or how to daven (pray). That is the job of the synagogue.

If you feel you need training on such issues, please talk to your Rabbi or to the Aleph leader.

Instead, our training is intended to provide specialized training, based on Jewish principles that most institutions do not provide.

DESCRIPTION OF TRAINING PARTS

The volunteer training has four parts, which should occur as close together as possible. It's best if all four parts are completed within two to three months.

Each of the four parts of training may be conducted in group settings or one-to-one (an experienced volunteer training another volunteer). The training will be easy to plan and conduct, and it is designed so volunteers can become the trainers. Manuals and videos will be provided through Aleph.

Each part of the training may be adapted by Aleph. For example, special speakers, such as chaplains, wardens, ex-prisoners, and experienced volunteers may be included. Instructional videos or movies could be added, and each part of the training may be made longer, if desired.

Part 1- Opening the door

The goals of Part 1 are to provide people with a small amount of training and have them observe a prison-related event. Participants in Part 1 are either people who want to become volunteers or people interested in working with prisoners but still unsure if they want to get involved.

Part 1 includes training, with a volunteer's manual (with accompanying trainer's manual) that gives a basic overview of the Aleph Institute and major do's and don'ts of working with prisoners.

Part 2- A Look Inside

The goals of Part 2 are to give volunteers an overview of prison related work, and help them better understand prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families. Part 2 will also help them decide which areas they might want to choose.

The training will give an overview of prisons, prisoners, prisoners' families, ex-prisoners, and Aleph Institute programs. Several short videos will aid this training, with each video followed by activities and questions from the Part 2 manual.

Part 3-Side by Side

The goal of Part 3 is to help volunteers adjust attitudes and learn skills so they can help prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families. Part 3 will include learning ways to listen, understand, and respond appropriately to people, and how to help them accept responsibility and set goals. This part will include a volunteer's manual (with accompanying trainer's manual) that emphasizes learning through activities.

Part 4- Behind the Wall

Reviews the Jewish laws observed in prison, what are the issues in the prison you will be visiting. Is Kosher food permitted etc. Every state have different rules, county or city jails will have their issues as does the Federal prisons.

CONCLUSION

After four parts of training, Aleph Institute volunteers will be well trained and eligible for certification. Of course, they won't know everything they'll need to know, because each person and situation is different.

This training is only a push in the right direction. Further advanced training in special areas maybe planned by the Aleph Institute. Experience will be a great teacher.

Each training manual will include a list of resources, including recommended books to help volunteers continue learning and training on their own. The more volunteers learn and know, the more they'll find they need to learn and know.