

Description of Volunteers In Psychotherapy's Export Initiative:

Volunteers In Psychotherapy [VIP] is a nonprofit organization constructed over 16 years ago to provide truly private psychotherapy that clients earn in exchange for their charitable volunteering. VIP clients volunteer at the charity, nonprofit or government agency of their choice [without that agency knowing of their VIP connection], while those hours of volunteering earn clients their private psychotherapy. Clients gain all the benefits of volunteering while earning their VIP psychotherapy sessions. Participating VIP licensed psychotherapists are paid, per session, through funds VIP raises, as a tax-exempt nonprofit organization, from individual donors and charitable grants to support this work. VIP clients and therapists sign a "reverse release of information" agreeing that therapists will work as privately as CT state law allows: no information will be released to anyone else, therapists won't write or talk to anyone about the therapy, and no evaluations will be done. This helps clients speak openly about personal or secret concerns which are often the source of their confusion or emotional upset.

VIP is now beginning a secondary initiative, beyond its primary charitable service, providing psychotherapy in the greater Hartford area (since 1999).

In recent years, roughly 100 psychotherapists nationwide have contacted VIP for help developing similar programs in their communities. VIP provided each group with a free one-hour phone meeting – but now funding from the Good People Fund and the Deupree Family Foundation will allow VIP to help others actually develop independent adaptations of VIP's charitable services in their areas through ongoing consultations over a period of some months.

On a rolling basis, groups of licensed therapists can now apply for ongoing consultation with VIP's staff, to adapt VIP's approach to a nonprofit therapy service each regional group will develop in their own locale across the U.S. Each group will receive up to 35 hours of assistance in developing their own VIP-like nonprofit service.

If your group's application is accepted, VIP staff will help you sharpen your thinking about your choices in developing your local service. We will advise you about local resources you may be able to find through various nonprofit support programs, technical assistance programs, pro bono legal and accounting assistance, as well as providing our own suggestions about how to handle these matters. We'll help you to locate Foundation Library collections providing access to other useful writings and resources and listings of relevant funders who are available once your group attains nonprofit status with the IRS. We will help guide you through your development of your application to become an independent nonprofit entity through your relevant state offices, and in applying for tax-exempt status through the IRS.

Successful [accepted] groups of regional "stakeholders" will be those that present evidence that they have enough motivation, experience or other personal resources to accomplish these tasks, with our help, becoming the Board of Directors for the incipient, independent nonprofit service. We will accept your group and sign a contract to consult with your group for up to 35 hours of phone, skype or similar consultation within the coming months. Funding through The Good People Fund and the Deupree Family Foundation will modestly reimburse VIP for that consultation.

As your contribution towards that work, we require all accepted groups to contribute \$500 towards those 35 hours of consultation. That \$500 is a reimbursable loan that you (or anyone whom you get to contribute toward that loan) would make toward the development of your nonprofit organization. You could fundraise contributions to reach that \$500 amount. Once you have attained nonprofit status, your tax-exempt fundraising should allow you to refund that loan to all who contributed to it. [Of course, those who initially loan funds towards your development could choose to forego repayment, and may

choose to designate those funds as an outright tax-deductible contribution to your tax-exempt organization, once the organization is granted that determination of nonprofit status by the IRS.]

Re-creation of VIP's model:

Some therapists might want to adapt VIP's approach, with only minor variations, to the nonprofit service they'd offer in their region. They, too, might want to preserve the privacy of therapy discussions, particularly when public clinics or managed care practices often put little emphasis on privacy. It is now common practice for insurers to demand reports about people's private therapy discussions, in order for therapists to be paid. Also, in many clinics and practices, psychiatric care comes primarily in the form of provision of medication, in brief medication checks that occur every few months. The particulars of a person's life situation, their stressors and the nature of their upset or confusion are rarely discussed in detail. These problems and others are remedied by VIP's approach.

Variations/Adaptations of VIP's model:

Other groups or organizations might want to make more creative and substantial adaptations to VIP's approach. Here are some examples we've already begun helping others to develop:

1) Graduate programs that teach psychotherapy [Psychology, Social Work, Family Therapy, Counseling, Nursing, etc.] often provide clinics in which trainees learn therapy by providing supervised therapy sessions, as do psychoanalytic [or other post-licensure] advanced psychotherapy training programs. Those programs often provide therapy for no fee, or reduced fees. But, borrowing from VIP's approach, practitioners could learn to provide services through a model in which the therapist's time is earned [in full or in part] by clients who value and "pay for" their private therapy through independent and private community service. This provides all the advantages that come from a free market exchange between independent individuals, with no bureaucratic insurance requirements, nor any other agendas beyond honest therapeutic exploration [no legal involvements, no applications for disability funding, no evaluations for educational waivers, etc.]. Also, clients then assume responsibility for irresponsibly "Late Cancelled" or "No Show" appointments. Although VIP clients earn their therapy by volunteering, they're personally responsible to pay a pre-set fee for Late CA or NS appointments.

2) National professional psychotherapy organizations often unite people who advocate for fairer or more specialized or in-depth help for people in different regions. A VIP-adapted "clinic without walls" could allow therapists in different regions to provide specialized assistance to clients in their own locale, with oversight and reimbursement through the umbrella organization. So, an umbrella organization that focuses on provision of family therapy, or therapy from a trauma-related perspective, might allow provision of services through their members throughout the US, perhaps with phone supervision by other experienced member practitioners. The professional organization would also provide a nonprofit structure that potentially allows for some reimbursement to each therapist from the umbrella group for services provided.

3) Somewhat similarly, organizations that have expertise to preserve or impart might adapt a model in which therapists provide services with no reimbursement, but with the therapist gaining valuable training and supervision. When one nationally prominent psychiatric hospital was disbanding, senior therapists there were concerned that younger generations of therapists might lose access to the expertise they had developed over decades, working with severely troubled clients. VIP consulted with senior hospital staff about a model in which their experienced clinicians might provide supervisory sessions to younger therapists in the community who were eager to benefit from their training, learning to work in therapy with severely troubled clients. These clients might be required to earn their therapy by doing some form of volunteer work in the community. Reimbursement for therapists or supervisors could be a component

of such a structure, or it might be dispensed with – depending on the vision and preferences of those who constructed this sort of service. But therapists would definitely earn free supervision of their work from experienced clinicians who were eager to teach.

4) Ex-patients have often been justifiably critical of the coercion, force and lack of accurate informed consent they experienced when they were subject to institutional or involuntary psychiatric treatment. A VIP-like adaptation, in which the development of the service organization is overseen by ex-patients, as well as people with an interest in privacy or civil liberties, (and perhaps academics and therapy providers) should make for an ethically-enhanced service model. That new approach should have the added advantage of providing services to people of limited means, or who lack access to truly private therapy, whether they possess health insurance or not. Also, working independently of health insurance reimbursement, no participant is pressured to undermine privacy, nor to describe services as if they were based on medical disorders or medical necessity, rather than being based on the choice and preference of the service seeker. In other words, people always retain their civil liberties and responsibility in a VIP-like approach. Therapy is always voluntary, not probationary – clarifying issues of responsibility and relationship boundaries for everyone involved. An egalitarian exchange of voluntary services is also a hallmark of VIP's service.

5) Completely new adaptations of VIP's approach. Of course, one of the broad advantages of VIP's Export Initiative is that people may suggest completely new and creative approaches to this work. We encourage applicants to express their ideas [and the context of the experiences that contributed to it] in developing their applications.

Any people interested in recreating or adapting VIP's approach are asked to submit an application, describing themselves, their interest in developing such a charitable service, their experience, available resources, etc. [see Application for Volunteers In Psychotherapy's Export Initiative]. A minimum of two people must form the incipient team, applying for VIP's consultative assistance.

Discussion of the Application process or any particulars can be initiated by contacting VIP's Director, Dr. Rich Shulman at (860) 233-5115, or by e-mail: CTVIP@hotmail.com.