

III. NETWORKING & ADVOCACY

Since our beginnings in 1991, PASAN has always maintained a focus on systemic advocacy on issues of HIV/AIDS and prisons. Our advocacy is based in a recognition and defense of the fundamental human rights of prisoners, and our perspective derives from PASAN's brief entitled *HIV/AIDS in Prison Systems: A Comprehensive Strategy* (June 1992). This document, which outlined 40 recommendations for implementing a comprehensive HIV/AIDS strategy in the Canadian prison system, served as the impetus and the basis for the report by the federal government's *Expert Committee on AIDS in Prisons* (ECAP) in February 1994.

In June 1996, PASAN released the follow-up document *HIV/AIDS in Youth Custody Settings: A Comprehensive Strategy* which specifically addressed the needs of youth in custody. In May 1999, PASAN released a new document on male-to-female transsexual/transgendered prisoners and HIV/AIDS.

PASAN organized the *First National Workshop on HIV/AIDS in Prison* (Kingston, 1995). PASAN has made presentations on HIV/AIDS in prisons at the *XI International Conference on AIDS* in Vancouver (July 1996) and has appeared before the *Parliamentary Subcommittee on AIDS* in Ottawa (Nov. 1996) and the *Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS* in Washington, DC (June 1998) and the *Canadian Human Rights Commission* (Oct. 2001)

PASAN maintains an Activist Committee which monitors and advocates on issues affecting prisoners and/or people living with HIV/AIDS on a local, provincial and national basis. This committee maintains working links with other prisoners' rights groups, prison projects, and ASOs across Canada. We also maintain an ad-hoc Advisory Committee of prisoners who assist us in identifying emerging issues and strategizing responses.

P A S A N

Prisoners' HIV/AIDS Support Action Network

i n f o b u l l e t i n # 1

WHO WE ARE...

PASAN is a community-based network of prisoners, ex-prisoners, organizations, activists and individuals working together to provide advocacy, education and support to prisoners and youth in custody on HIV/AIDS and related issues.

PASAN formed in 1991 as a grassroots response to the emerging AIDS crisis in the Canadian prison system.

Today, PASAN is the only community-based organization in Canada exclusively providing HIV/AIDS prevention education and support services to prisoners, ex-prisoners, youth in custody and their families.

P A S A N

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WE ACCEPT COLLECT CALLS FROM PRISONERS IN CANADA

WHAT WE DO...

I. SUPPORT SERVICES

PASAN offers support services to prisoners, youth in custody and their families, as well as to other organizations working on HIV/AIDS and/or prison issues.

These services include:

- a) Individual **support counselling, advocacy, pre-release planning and referrals** for prisoners and youth in custody living with HIV/AIDS, primarily in Ontario region institutions. We can assist our clients in accessing proper medical care and support while incarcerated, as well as help to arrange housing and medical/social support upon release. Much of this support is coordinated via telephone through **collect calls**, although we also do in-person support whenever possible. To date, PASAN has worked with more than 400 HIV positive prisoners and youth in custody in over 30 different institutions (both federal and provincial) in six different provinces.
- b) The only **National AIDS Hotline specifically for prisoners**. We accept collect calls from prisoners across Canada at (416) 920-9567 and can help you with your questions about HIV/AIDS, and help you get the support you need.
- c) An emergency financial assistance fund which provides limited **financial support** for both provincial and federal prisoners and youth in custody living with HIV/AIDS. We can help with things like replacement fees for birth certificates, S.I.N. cards and other necessary ID and we have a small fund to help people newly released from prison. The availability of these funds vary, and we require proof of HIV status for people accessing the fund.

d) PASAN also provides ongoing support, networking, **resources and training for AIDS services organizations** (ASOs) and other community groups across Ontario. We assist ASOs to set up their own prison outreach and support projects, and act as a referral "hub" for HIV positive prisoners and youth in custody who are transferred from one region to another, thereby helping to ensure a continuity of support.

II. OUTREACH & EDUCATION SERVICES

- a) PASAN conducts **HIV prevention education programs** in many adult and youth institutions in the southern Ontario region. An integral part of this program is our **Peer Educators' Group**, which is made up entirely of ex-prisoners living with HIV/AIDS. Peer speakers accompany PASAN staff for educationals in prisons, youth facilities, and other institutions. We have found that our Peers are often best able to get across HIV/AIDS information in these settings.
- b) PASAN produces a **quarterly bulletin** entitled *CELL COUNT*. This unique publication, which is written and edited primarily by prisoners and ex-prisoners themselves, is the only newsletter in Canada providing an uncensored forum for prisoners and youth in custody to explore and share their own experiences, ideas, and fears about HIV/AIDS. PASAN distributes 4000 issues a year to prisoners, institutions, and agencies across the country. *CELL COUNT* is **free for prisoners and people living with HIV/AIDS** in Canada.
- c) PASAN is also available to conduct **free organizational and staff training** for agencies and institutions working with prison-affected, and drug using populations. We have experience in conducting training not only for community workers and ASO staff, but also for probation/parole officers, youth custody staff, prison social workers and case management officers.